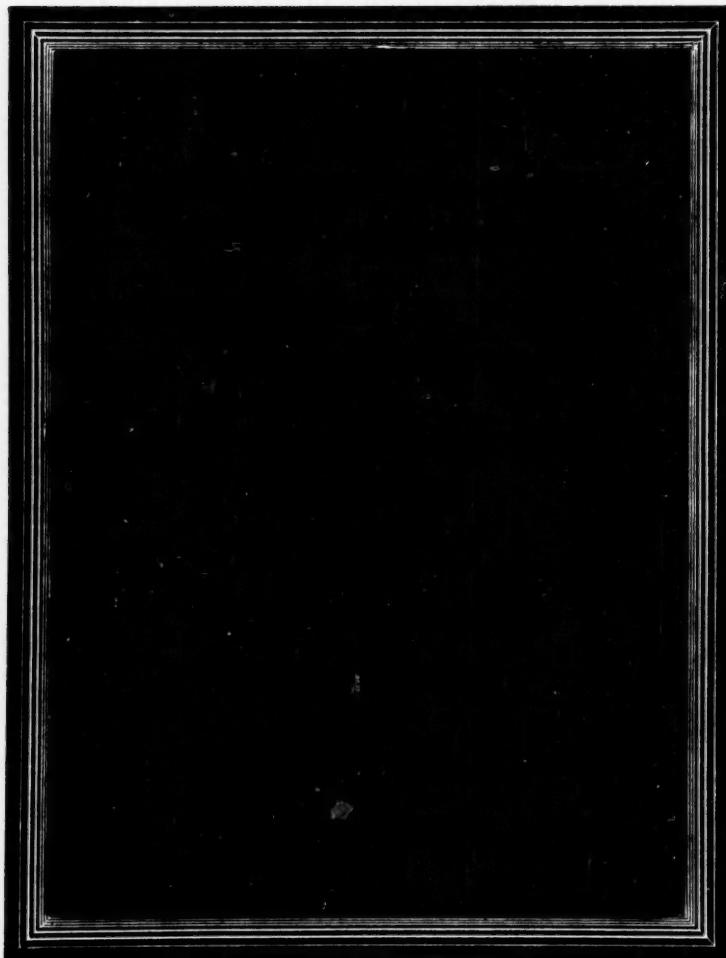
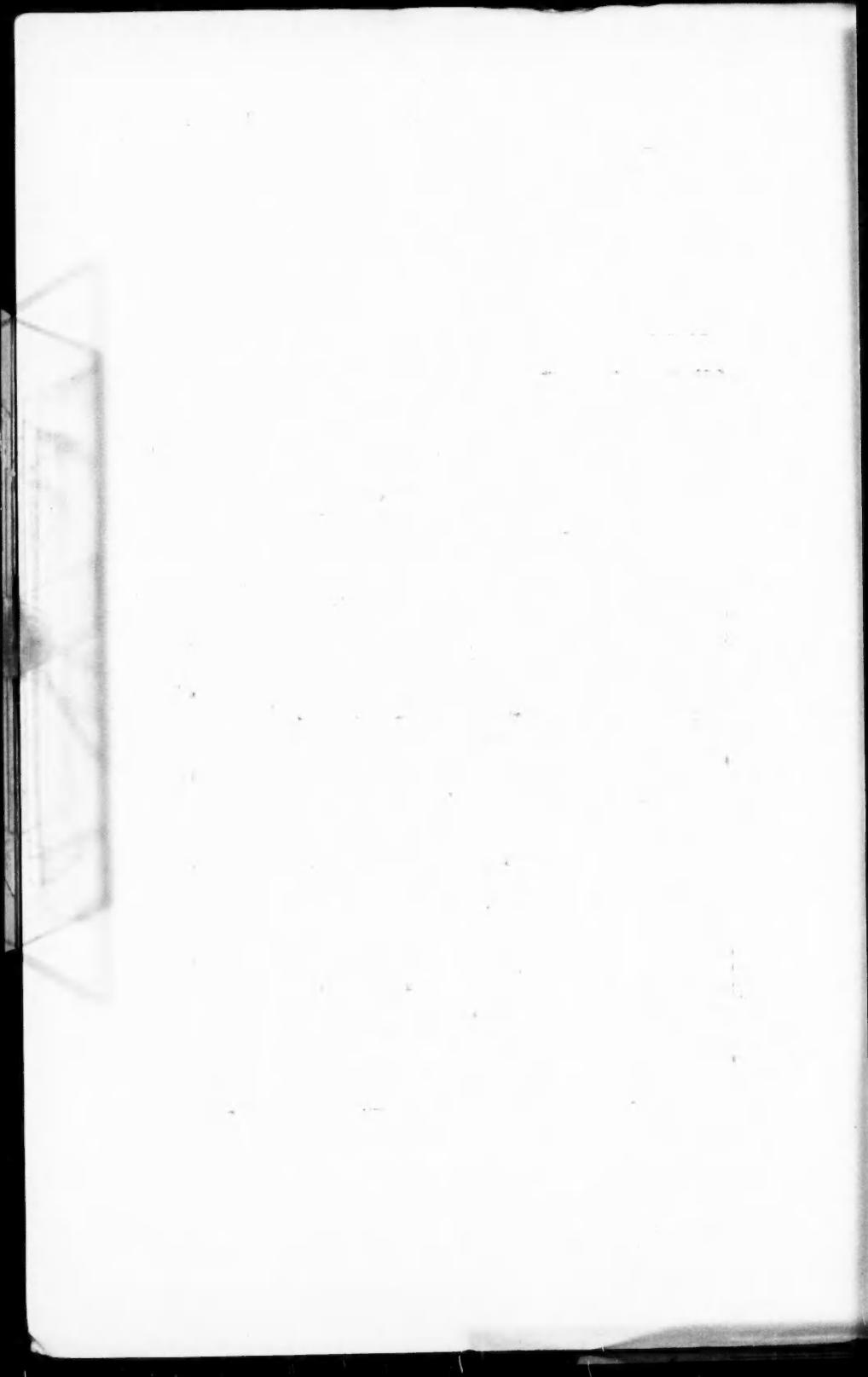


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A LETTER FROM BARON VON HÜGEL

(HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED)

PREFATORY NOTE

MANY years ago, a girl of fifteen whose mother and grandmother were intimate friends of the von Hügels was invited to stay with them while she attended a day school in London. She was a shy, moody child, having suffered from an uneasy upbringing by parents who were devoted to their children but who were wildly dissimilar in outlook and tastes: there had been little stability in her life, with governesses and servants coming and going, ever-present money troubles and conflicting loyalties.

Over forty years have passed since this young person entered the house of Baron von Hügel and his wife, Lady Mary, for the first time, but to her it now seems only yesterday. There was a unique atmosphere in that house in Vicarage Gate which she has never encountered in any other. No people could have been so different as the Baron, his eccentric and lovable wife, the daughter of Sidney Herbert, and their handsome daughter, Hildegard, but each in totally different ways contributed to the warmth, the charitableness, the humorous tolerance which enveloped all the incongruous people who came to the house; men of learning to see the Baron, artists and musicians to call on Lady Mary, and the *beau monde* and working girls to visit their daughter, for Hildegard enjoyed a London season as much as anyone as well as working arduously at a Catholic Girls' Club, which she had founded herself. And this girl, to whom the following letter was written, found herself welcomed not merely as the daughter and granddaughter of intimate friends, but as someone whose young life was the greatest concern to each member of that wonderful family; Lady Mary entertained her with fascinating stories of her youth and introduced her to her artistic friends; Hildegard petted and spoilt her, arranged for her

to have a gay outing on her half-holidays, paying for these out of her slender purse ; Eva, the beloved old German maid, refurbished her unbecoming clothes ; and as for the Baron, he took this raw girl under his special care, guiding her in her studies, opening her eyes to the spiritual life and giving her, unworthy though she was, his deep understanding and fatherly love.

To give a living picture of Baron von Hügel is not within the powers of the person to whom it was written.

Many of those who were privileged to know him have written of his deep humanity, his extraordinary understanding, his delightful and individual sense of humour and the wholeheartedness with which he threw himself into everything he undertook. His care of this young girl was a living example of that wholeheartedness. Every evening, after her school hours, he read aloud to her and he allowed nothing to interfere with these readings though he was deeply engaged on one of his great books at the time. He took her to art galleries, museums and sometimes to films, which were silent in those days and in which he took a boyish delight. No detail of her life was too small for his attention ; later, when she went to High Wycombe School, he journeyed down there expressly to take the formidable head mistress, Miss Dove, to task because 'the Bit' was not given hot baths there and her hands were covered with chilblains. ('The Bit' was his name for this adopted youngest daughter, as he came to think of her ; and a bit of a thing she was, compared to the large and handsome von Hügels.)

With the Baron she read not only works of history and philosophy but also Browning's *Paracelsus*, *The Ring and the Book*, and novels of Trollope which he delighted in. She never thinks of those readings now without remembering 'Teufel', the poodle (more or less), who accompanied the sonorous lines of Browning with snores from the hearthrug and later an absurd little peke called Puck who was always given the best chair. These two animals were the Baron's constant companions and he often used them as incongruous illustrations when he was speaking of profound and holy matters.

The infinite pains, the immense time that Baron von Hügel gave in teaching this girl of fifteen the way to study and the way to pray still fills her, now an elderly woman, with astonishment and a sense of her unworthiness. With him every detail of her life, every facet of history or literature or art, was a means of apprehending

the existence of God. The presence of God was virtually his only preoccupation, and all subjects, whether intellectual or banal, led him back to that preoccupation. In spite of constant ill health, deafness and many personal griefs, his whole being radiated joy, a joy which was expressed in his dark eyes, his eager movements, his quick footsteps and which had its roots in his tremendous faith. He had an extraordinary gift for coining phrases which were both individual and illuminating, some of them intentionally grotesque, others truly profound. '*La sainteté de la vérité*' was one in the last category, spoken to a French priest in this young girl's hearing, and which summed up in a few words the Baron's attitude to religion and his absolute integrity.

The letter that follows was written to a non-Catholic girl who was not confirmed until she was seventeen years of age. She hopes it will be read by people of all denominations, not only as a preparation to confirmation but as a guide all through life to the Way of the Cross.

Kensington, 11th March, 1910.

My very dear child,

I am putting upon this paper for you, with much quiet reflection and prayer, those *four great religious principles and practices*, which we considered together, by word of mouth, a week ago. I shall here try to make them still clearer and more precisely applied to your own case and use. And I am sending you this letter in time for you to go through it all, in a leisurely and browsing fashion, so that it may help you to form your resolutions before and on Monday next, the 14th.

But before developing those four principles and practices, I want to bring home to your mind three prerequisites of their proper, fruitful use as clearly as I can.

I. 1. Religion is indeed authoritative, since *only if felt and accepted as not of our making but of God's giving is it religion at all*. And it is deeply social, since we shall never learn much about it, except souls more experienced than ourselves are touched by God to come and start us and help us on our way. Yet that authority is exercised and experienced in and through our human religious sense and conscience; and this social aid can (in proportion as we begin to attain the age and maturity of personal responsibility) act wholesomely *only in and through the unforced insight of our own, docilely inclined, minds and the free, loving self-dedication of our own wills*. Hence,

Blessing, you will not *for one moment* strain, or torture yourself, to think or to do any one of the things here proposed to you. Only in the degree and manner in which, after thinking them well over, in a prayerful and open disposition, they really come home to your mind and really appeal to your own heart and conscience, will you quietly accept them and try and work them into your life. And after having thus helped to awaken your own mind and conscience to these great realities and practices, I can be of use to you in sustaining you to follow these lights, now your own, in times of darkness and of trouble. *These are the only two wholesome helps one soul can give another, as concerns such fundamentals.*

2. *The following four realities and practices combine with, condition, contrast with, and correct, each other*, if and when we try and live them, in endless manners and degrees; and for this reason also, they prevent the interior life from ever growing really stale or essentially monotonous. But, though my separate enumeration of them necessarily impoverishes them all, such enumeration will help you to understand the rich reality somewhat, against the time when such experience will have made you apprehend it all so much more truly, Blessing.

3. And, above all, even these four realities and principles taken together, indeed *the whole of the specifically religious world and life*, ever presuppose, if and when we poor humans use them wisely and well, *quite a number of other lives that we have to live*, each with its own specific laws, objects, organization and end. These lives, religious, moral, political, social, intellectual, aesthetic, physical, have each their immanent laws and range, yet each requires also all the others, and they all require to be wisely and courageously penetrated and purified, yet never really atrophied, by the higher and highest, and to be ever re-harmonized into an ever-growing and deepening whole, into that complex, powerful, costing thing, the true, spiritual human personality. Hence though I have described to you the most important among these many things, and point out to you those that should purify all the others; yet those others too are *strictly* necessary even for religion itself. For without those other things religion would not have the fulness of the materials for it to penetrate, nor the occasions of conflict, friction and of humiliatingly slow advance without which itself (that is our own wills and hearts when religious) would not be purified. For we are so small, and the work is so great, that not only must religion ever purify the rest of us, but the difficulties arising over this purifi-

cation have to help us ever to purify our religion itself. You will then, Child, even for the sake of religion itself, ever eagerly love your games, your dancing, your hunting, and such other physical pleasures and activities as suit your health and social circumstances; you will enter delightedly into your music and poetry and other art; you will devote yourself to your studies of history or science; you will wholeheartedly care for, and help (in proportion to your special gifts and *attrait*s) in—social, political, moral questions and necessities. And in each case, at each level, you will, in the first instance, simply try and discover and obey the laws immanent to that particular case and level. *The more varied and vigorous is your general, not directly religious life, the better for your religion, on condition always that you never do so much and so great a variety of things as to lose your power of recollection away from it all and your ability to harmonize it all with some difficulty and fairly well.* All real racket, all actual fever, all vehemence, strain and bitterness are weakening and sterilizing. Let us ever drop these, as soon as we see them, and get, as far as ever we can, physical, or mental, or spiritual rest and expansion.

II. 1. *The reality and practice of the Presence of God.* I mean the sense, and the cultivation of the sense, of His omnipresence, of His *prevenience*, of all things, in their essence (which is beautiful, true and good) coming from Him, and especially all our very capacity for, and slightest wish for, goodness and Him. It is, at the same time, a sense of our pathetic limitations, as against the great background and presence of the Infinite and Abiding; of the utter unsatisfyingness of whatsoever is but scattered about space, or can or does pass away in sheer succession. And this *sense it is which is the centrally human sense*; without it we would be no more truly men. Yet this sense comes from the actual touch, the enveloping and penetrating presence, of the Infinite Spirit, God upon, around and within our spirits which, finite though they be are sufficiently God-like to cause them to suffer under the keen sense of contrast of the two worlds which both touch them, and both of which they touch; the Abiding, Infinite, Spiritual; and the Fleeting, Temporal, Material.

You will, Blessing, gradually get your life saturated with this sense. The following texts express it grandly: Rom. xi, 33: 'O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out.' I John iv, 8, 10: 'God is love. Herein is love, not that we loved

God, but that He loved us.' Acts xvii, 27, 28: 'He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being.' II Cor. iii, 5. 'Our sufficiency is from God.'

It will be especially in your *daily quarter of an hour* of spiritual reading and direct Recollection that you will be able to foster and feed this sense. But throughout the day (as you learn to take one thing at a time and ever to let drop all sheer bustle and fever) you will have many opportunities of, more indirectly, encouraging it, until, at last, it will become an ever, more or less perceived, background and support, a light and balm and refreshment to your life, Child.

And then, and then alone, will you have gained, with this sense of this presence of the Infinite Lover and comprehender of your soul, a truly efficacious means against impatience, intolerance, injustice towards all and any of your fellow-mortals, and against the danger, that ever dogs the steps of all very sensitive souls, of becoming embittered, or gloomy, or broken, when in the course of life, keen disappointments or grave misunderstandings come to them. For, once you have learnt that the Infinite Spirit alone can, but that He indeed does, completely, ceaselessly understand you, you can and will be sufficiently satisfied and moderated, gratefully to realize how much He and that fellow-mortal can and does understand you—most certainly at times, far better than you will ever understand yourself.

Besides, this sense, when strongly developed, will teach you more and more to live, not so much in order to get, as in order to give; not so much in order to be loved as in order to love; as Our Lord has said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts xx, 35). 'Nearer we hold of God who gives, than of His tribes that take.'

2. *The reality and practice of contingency, of creatureliness.* As a matter of fact, a wholesome, full sense of the Infinite arises and is renewed, within us, not only by recollection but also by contact with the contingent, with matter, time and space. It is not only that we have a body and (partly physical) fellow-creatures, so that we have duties towards all these visible palpable things; but that *the sense of the Infinite and of the Finite spring up together and condition each other.* Hence we shall never attain a thoroughly wholesome, deeply spiritual religion, unless we take care to give it, and to keep for it, a body.

It is no doubt certain that at the time of such attention to par-

ticular, institutional acts—the kneeling for, and the recitation of, formal vocal prayers, the attending of church services, even the reception of Holy Communion—we often feel as though contracted, as though all these things were dry and petty; and as though God, Spirit and Infinite, must be right outside all such temptations and materialities.

Yet life shows us everywhere how necessary, for our fuller expansion and true deepening, are such seemingly narrowing, humblingly obscure contacts with the visible—such contractions of our attention and feeling to *things*, to matter, to the little Here and Now. The narrow mountain defile, ‘the warm gates’, *Thermopylae*, was the one entrance, from outside Greece to the broad plains of Thessaly and on to rich, free Hellas beyond. And so in human affection, however spiritual, some ‘contraction’ and contact, by sight, or handshake, or letter, is necessary for its fuller elicitation and maintenance. The pathetic narrowesses of birth and babyhood precede, and are the necessary vehicles of, the larger and ever larger adolescent and adult life. And suffering (seemingly so opaque itself, and tending, if alone, to obscure and to contract the soul) in reality, if taken up by a will full of faith and love, enlightens and expands, in unique fashion and degree. So too *religion requires some apparently unnecessary, emotionally more or less irksome contractions and attentions to visible and audibly institutional and social acts and rites*. Without *some* such, we cannot fully capture and maintain a deep wholesome recollection and spirituality.

Christianity is specially great in that it does not ignore or neglect, but that it enters into and sanctifies, the body. For it consists, not simply in the great doctrine that ‘God is a Spirit, and they that would serve Him, must serve Him in spirit and in truth’ (John iv, 24), but also in the doctrine that ‘The Word was made Flesh’ (John i, 14). It represents to us, not only Christ as saying to the Samaritan woman ‘the hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father’ (John iv, 21), but it also describes to us the sick woman cured by the touch of the hem of Christ’s garment—the woman who said ‘if I touch but his garment, I shall be whole’ (Matt. ix, 20, 21).

These two things, together or in alternation, and not either of them alone constitute the very soul and force of christianity. And indeed, here as elsewhere, this its soul so reveals and meets the deepest, implied requirements of the human spirit, as touched by God, the Infinite spirit in all lands and times, that there is no more certain way to-

wards separating us from our fellow-men, and producing spiritual emptiness, restlessness and inflation, than contempt for, or absence of all reverence towards and practice of, the visible, audible, institutional idea of religion.

We have, then, simply to find out the amount and kind of such outgoings to the contacts and contingencies, and the amount and kind of such homecomings to the (thus awakened) sense of the Infinite and to largely formless recollection in it, which our character, grace and present development may best grow by and require; and then faithfully and generously to practise this kind and degree of both, as thoroughly as we can. You will, in any case, practise your morning and night prayers, on your knees, for such outgoings; and attendance at church service, I should say once every Sunday and, I take it, on Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Ascension Day. And Holy Communion would, I suppose, be received once a month. I put the amounts here tentatively, since it is not *they*, but the presence and regularity of *some* such institutional acts which alone I can be sure of. And this *presence and regularity are indeed so essential, that, in the long run, you get two contradictory outlooks on to life according as they are present or absent*. You, Blessing, will, please God, ever re-decide for the deep, incarnational reality of all fully living life.

3. *The reality, and practice of the sense of, our human weakness, error, sin.* It is very certain that we can most easily endanger or ruin our religion and its helpfulness, by straining after too direct, or excessive, or continuous, a sense of sin, or by a too frequent and lengthy or too detailed a preoccupation with our own precise offences and evil tendencies. It is also certain that Calvin, indeed, in a lesser degree, also Luther and Pascal also, gravely exaggerated in this matter. Human nature is *not* essentially vitiated, and the whole of religion does *not* consist in a sense of sin and of our redemption by Our Lord from such sin. Even already St. Paul concentrates himself with an intense exclusiveness, in most of his moods, upon our utter sinfulness, and, in the whole of Our Lord's earthly life, upon the Passion, as the ransom for these our sins, alone; whereas in the synoptic Gospels we get Our Lord's life and teaching as well as His Passion, and all these activities there constitute His great self-offering to God and His redemptive office and example towards ourselves, and we there find Him insisting chiefly upon our blindness and weakness—thus with the cures of the blind men (Mark viii and x) and the great saying at Gethsemane,

'the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak' (Matt. xxvi, 41).

Yet it is also true, and especially perhaps for us nowadays, that we can easily grow morbidly fearful of morbidness, and can become unreal and dangerously silly in this matter. For, after all, we *are*, within limits, possessed of free will; we *are* responsible; we *do*, often, more or less continuously, not follow our better lights, our nobler promptings, the ways that we feel would teach us more of wholesomely costing truths about our duties and our faults; we *are*, often, more or less cowardly, indolent, double, severe or thoughtless towards others, meanly soft and touchy about ourselves; we *are* readily puffed up by insincere praise and dejected by deserved blame; we *are* ever very imperfect, we *are* insincere. Hence even in those excesses of one-sidedness there is a deep truth, apprehended by deep souls.

As to yourself, I should like you to *occupy yourself directly with your own particular faults and sins, only in two connections*. You would make a short and quiet examination of conscience, as to your doings of the day, every night at your night prayers; turning to God at the beginning and asking for light, and turning to Him at the end and begging pardon and determining, with the help of His grace, not to commit whatever you may find pricks your conscience again. And, if and when you find yourself self-complacent, or markedly tempted to it, turn your mind (for a moment) to any act or fault of your past that you especially regret. But, outside of these two occasions (the one regularly recurrent, the other incidental, and both of them short and precisely limited) *live, Child, habitually occupied with God and His love and greatness, with your work and with all things as souls beautiful, true and good*—with all that God has given you to love. Joy, expansion, admiration, adoration, gratitude—much, very much occupation with others, with God in and through it all—let this, at other times, absorb you away from all direct occupation with yourself. To love dearly, to contemplate habitually the right things, to grow unconsciously like what you admire, what deserves admiration, with all you are to have: this should be the primary, prevalent preservation against, and purification from, your very real evil inclinations, faults and sins. And yet if others, even roughly or unjustly reprimand or criticize you, try hard, not only to be patient, but also gratefully to learn; and if you find this difficult or impossible, recognize that in *this* at least you are very faulty, and try to do better another time.

4. *The reality, and the sense of the true function, of suffering.* Christianity is unique in the fulness, steadiness and fruitfulness of its doctrine and power as to this fundamental point. And here again we all of us have, nowadays especially, an immense, immediate, need of this insight and force.

Two extremes and errors, each showing the profound weakness and blindness of religiously unenlightened and unaided human nature have, outside of christianity and its devoted acceptance, ever prevailed, both produced from the same root, and each ever ending by calling forth the other. Either suffering, pain, death are taken, are attempted to be declared and made into, nothing, mere subjective creatures of our own minds, which these minds can and ought, consequently, to dissolve into the utter nothing from which they came (stoicism, etc.) ; or suffering, pain, death are taken to be all, or at least final, to be the reality, the end of all things (pessimism). The secret terror that the latter is the truth in the (most well-grounded) sense that man cannot (in the long run) stand such a doctrine, is doubtless the fundamental cause of the creation of the former, otherwise profoundly artificial and ever precarious system. And both are godless; indeed it is because they have no God, no experience of a real goodness and love which really triumph over real evil, that they thus teach and reel from side to side. Christianity alone fully faces and exhaustively admits the mysterious depth and poignant reality of all the woe, the pain, the suffering, the loneliness, the misunderstandings, the war, the defeat, the death that permeate life around us and within us. And yet, not simply as a fine theory, or haughty doctrine, but *as a force and a fact, Christianity's ultimate note, the end of it all, is with the help of Christ's spirit, purification, acceptance, expansion, intimate union with God and man, spiritual power, joy overflowing.* And all this not because the evil itself becomes good, not because we judge it differently, but because, on occasion of the evil which, of itself, only darkens, weakens and stains the soul, God's, Christ's strength has come to, and has been accepted, by the soul. There is nothing so great in life, darling spiritual daughter, as this larger, tender asceticism, nothing we all want more than this noble, utterly unmorbid, alone quite wholesome, virile understanding and willing of the great cross of Christ.

St. Paul has it so gloriously: 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but unto those that are called, Christ the power of God and the wis-

A LETTER FROM BARON VON HÜGEL 11

dom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men'. 'Dirige me recto itinere in regnum tuum' we will pray with Thomas à Kempis, to Christ Our Lord. This *rectum iter* will not only lead to, but will largely consist of, much admiration, expansion, love and joy; but, inevitably, it will, not lead to, but will in considerable part be made up of, increasingly endorsed and willed suffering, also, Blessing.

For your practice here you will just simply, when suffering, physical or mental, comes, try promptly to accept it, and gently to utilize it towards loving God and man more fully and strongly than before—of course in and by prayer, by a soul's look to God. It would be well too if you had some external symbol or action to incarnate for you this great, glorious truth; a crucifix, or crucifix picture, however small; or a little sign of the cross, before and after meals; or sleeping with your arms crossed.

Largely formless recollection, a prayer of quiet and love; a small number of carefully elected and persistently repeated institutional acts; a short, but recurrent and direct, occupation with your definite faults and sins; and a learning to accept and utilize all such suffering as God may send you or allow; those four things worked with simplicity, perseverance, and above all, *with love, and love, AND LOVE*: these will, Blessing, bring to you an unshakeable, because creaturely strength, a deep joy, and a steady homely heroism, a gently flowing love and service of your fellow-creatures in, with and for God, the Infinite, our Home.

God bless you, darling spiritual daughter,
YOUR LOVING FATHERLY FRIEND.

My last three Holy Communions have been specially for you.

PRELIMINARIES TO THEISM¹

By VINCENT TURNER, S.J.

BY preliminaries to theism I mean preliminaries to theistic argument that are relevant to a philosopher's attention. I might perhaps have entitled this paper 'The Presuppositions of Theism'. But that would have been too solemn, for one thing, and a shade pompous. For another thing, it might have suggested to philosophers that I had in mind a set of presuppositions or regulative principles in the context of which, and only in the context of which, is theistic argument, or theistic talk, valid. But I have in mind no such set of regulative principles. I have given this paper the title I have, mainly to underline that I am not going to talk about theistic argument itself, but rather about the preliminaries that give it sense and direction, and flesh and blood.

To be more definite and concrete. Traditional theistic argument no longer cuts any ice. Even people who may not find any logical flaw in it yet confess that it has no bite; they are left intellectually unmoved. And they are very sincere people, and people, moreover, temperamentally very different among themselves. Why is this—why have our traditional procedures lost their bite? Let us not too readily summon the bogeys of logical positivism or logical empiricism. These particular teeth were blunt before Wittgenstein, and before Russell.

Or again: how is it that you hardly ever nowadays meet a theist, i.e. an undifferentiated theist? It is rare that an atheist or an agnostic, in fact, makes his way to theism, and then, say, to Christianity. He makes his way to Christianity (or, as in some cases, Buddhism), and takes theism (or pantheism) in his stride. True, in the nineteenth century this was not quite so. Then it was possible to find undifferentiated theists about (like the Romantics); but perhaps that was because their insights were closer than they knew to what they had learned at their mothers' knees.

¹ A lecture given in Oxford on 15 April, 1951.

These are the sorts of questions that I should like to direct attention to, in the hope of finding an answer. To waste no time, I shall say at once, provocatively, that giving an accurate answer involves asking and answering why it is that nobody has any longer much confidence in metaphysics, and why it is that this lack of confidence is justified.

To tackle this latter question first. The Master of Campion Hall was some time ago accused by a philosopher of probably thinking that the correct method in theistic argument was 'to start with (agreed) logical axioms, to argue from these to some very general metaphysical proposition about the existence of God, and then go on to discuss the nature of God'. The accusation was directed at the wrong target, but there are targets that it would hit. And the philosopher in question went on to say that 'the proposition that God exists must follow and not precede propositions about what God is and does. I do not, of course, demand a thorough, clear and precise account of the nature of God; but before we can begin to ask whether or not God exists, we must be told, at least in outline, what it is that is said to exist. . . . What does the word "God" mean? How does one recognize a God or detect his presence?'

Now the philosopher in question had in mind, I think, an idea that metaphysics, as he expected the Master of Campion Hall to understand the word, i.e. thomism, was a sort of geometrical business: a matter of having a few *a priori* propositions, a few empirical propositions, and then of a string of inferences, in linear fashion, from these. Now is metaphysics like that? It cannot be denied, I think, that it has too often been made to look like that—it tends to look like that in the kind of apologetics that is sometimes given boys and girls just before they leave school, and it looks foolish. And it cannot be denied either, I think, that this is the kind of idea that those people have who are perpetually surprised that the traditional argument from contingency, let us say, turns out to be no knock-down argument and makes no impression on sincere inquirers.

Before we go on, may I draw attention to one obvious and commonly recognized feature in the history of theistic metaphysics? It is a feature that Etienne Gilson, to go no further, is always emphasizing. And that is that in fact Christian philosophical speculation has always been at least directed by Christian revelation. The self-revelation of Jahweh as 'I am who am', our

Lord's manifestation of the Fatherhood of God—these are the elements that have set the direction for Christian philosophers. They have at the least given them hints in which direction to look. It isn't, of course, to make the usual distinction, that Natural Theology uses data of revelation among the premises or the items in its arguments: there isn't an 'intrinsic dependence', as the phrase goes, of Natural Theology on Revelation. But such dependence as there is is real enough, and decisive. So that we do in fact have some idea what God is like (because we know what our Lord is like and what he said of His Father) before we begin philosophically to look for Him or to ask whether He exists. Historically, Christian philosophers have not philosophized *as if* there had never been any revelation. Revelation has not been among their premises, but it has shaped their procedures. It makes a vast difference whether or not you have in your mind the belief in the possibility of a personal God who can intervene in human history. And in fact it is doubtful whether we can get Christian revelation out of our bones, even if it were desirable for us as philosophers to do so.

Do we need to look any further than this for the explanation of a very obvious feature of theistic argument as we know it, a feature in which it differs profoundly from scientific argument? I mean this. To argue to the existence of God is not at all like arguing from something that we know to something that until we get to the conclusion we were ignorant of. A theistic philosopher's arguments are not at all like the accounts of an explorer declaring what he has discovered. They are not (to use an adjective of John Wisdom's) like a vertical argument from what you know to what you had no idea of till that moment. In a sense, we know all the time what we are looking for, and here too we may apply Pascal's saying: 'You would not be looking for me if you had not already found me.'

What, then, is theistic argument like? What does it do? An extremely intelligent doctor friend of mine, not a professional philosopher, once said to me that he thought the role of the Five Ways was to give intellectual respectability to what you were already quite well aware of, and aware of, therefore, on somewhat other grounds. Is this what their role is?

Let us leave this for the moment, and make one other preliminary observation that seems to me fair enough. In the nineteenth century there was a more robust confidence in system-making than there is now, and such systems usually had an Absolute of

some sort as their coping stone. But and also—and this is more to my present point—Christian ideas and outlooks were still operative, made their presence felt, even when they were overtly rejected. Nowadays there isn't this robustness and the Christian ideas are fainter. (You find the same feature in the history of moral philosophy, and it may be one reason, though only one, why many good men, including Christians, are subjectivist in their theory.) In the western world, when a man becomes dissatisfied or anguished with atheism or scepticism, Christian ideas regain something of their older operativeness to direct a man's searching; for it is not religion in general but some form of Christianity that such a man begins to entertain as a story that is possibly true. But for the man who is neutral, who has no dissatisfaction or anguish, the case is, I suspect, rather different to what it was for his ancestor of a hundred or even fifty years ago. The Christian outlooks are dimmer because, for one reason or another, the outlooks themselves are not, by and large, so familiar, and because it is assumed that they have been discredited—by one thing or another: tag ends of anthropology or psycho-analysis or comparative religion or biblical criticism or what not. One result is that non-empirical questions are thought, on analysis, not to be questions that can be asked (you don't know what you are asking, but if you did you would see that you couldn't ask it) but requests for reassurance of some kind.¹ Another result, of course, is that the possibility of a divine revelation isn't taken so seriously as it once was.

Now this affects the response made to theistic argument from the side of, say, an atheist. Fifty years ago your characteristic atheist would have disagreed with you and argued the matter, but he was as clear as you were (indeed usually, he thought, much clearer) about what it was he was denying when he said there was no God, and about what it was you were asserting when you said there was. Now it is not so. Now, as earlier I put it, the bite of argument is gone: and the atheist or sceptic will say: 'I don't know what you are talking about. You are asking questions that need not be asked, and you are using a word "God" that doesn't occur in any other sentences except these particular ones. I don't know what you mean when you use it in these sentences, what it is supposed to stand for; and I haven't anywhere else to look.'

As you will see, in my imaginary rejoinder from the sceptic I

¹ There are, it need not be said, many other reasons, and reasons of logic, for this state of affairs. The point of my remark in the text will be clearer in the sequel.

have introduced a piece of logic. But at the moment I want to stress only the other, the non-logical and non-philosophical, elements in the situation that are responsible, in some measure, I think, for theistic argument's not getting under way.

Now what has all this to do with the presuppositions of theistic discussion? Well, at least, somewhere in this area that I have been so far talking about was an outlook, at least entertained as a possibility, that once was more operative than it now is, and gave context to the asking of 'ultimate' or 'metaphysical' questions. But I want to get at this matter along a fresh avenue and by making a new start.

Philosophers lately have taken to telling or copying stories, and much use has been made of a story told by John Wisdom at a meeting of the Aristotelian Society six years ago. The consideration of this story gives me as good a chance as any for getting to a more sensitive view of the question we are concerned with now, and so I shall retell it. But while I am doing so I must crave the indulgence of philosophers, who are doubtless bored to death at having to hear it again. So in a way am I, and I hope I shall not fall into the ways of the Oxford lecturer who is said to have gone to sleep during his own lecture.

Here, then, is John Wisdom's story:

Two people return to their long-neglected garden and find among the weeds a few of the old plants surprisingly vigorous. One says to the other, 'It must be that a gardener has been coming and doing something about these plants.' Upon inquiry they find that no neighbour has ever seen anyone at work in their garden. The first man says to the other, 'He must have worked while people slept.' The other says, 'No, someone would have heard him, and besides, anybody who cared about the plants would have kept down these weeds.' The first man says, 'Look at the way these are arranged. There is purpose and a feeling for beauty here. I believe that someone comes, someone invisible to mortal eyes. I believe that the more carefully we look the more we shall find confirmation of this.' They examine the garden ever so carefully, and sometimes they come on new things suggesting that a gardener comes, and sometimes they come on new things suggesting the contrary, and even that a malicious person has been at work. Besides examining the garden carefully they also study what happens to gardens left without attention. Each learns what the other learns about this and about the garden. Consequently, when after all this one says, 'I still believe a gardener comes,' while the other says, 'I don't,' their different words now reflect no difference as to what they have found in the garden, no difference as to what they would find in the

garden if they looked further, and no difference about how fast un-tended gardens fall into disorder. At this stage, in this context, the gardener hypothesis has ceased to be experimental; the difference between one who accepts and one who rejects it is now not a matter of the one expecting something the other does not expect. What is the difference between them? The one says, 'A gardener comes unseen and unheard. He is manifested in his works with which we are familiar,' the other says, 'There is no gardener'; and with this difference in what they say about the gardener goes a difference in how they feel towards the garden, in spite of the fact that neither expects anything of it which the other does not expect.

But is this the whole difference between them—that the one calls the garden by one name and feels one way towards it, while the other calls it by another name and feels in another way towards it? And if this is what the difference has become, then is it any longer appropriate to ask 'Which is right?' or 'Which is reasonable?'

And yet surely such questions are appropriate. . . .

Enough of this garden story for the moment. (It is taken, by the way, from a paper entitled *Gods*, a paper that I find strangely moving, one whose combination of analysis and poetry lingers in the memory. It fascinates me, too, because I feel that the questions that Wisdom is pondering, about theistic interpretation, are akin to the questions that a remarkable theologian, Fr. Pierre Rousselot, was pondering in 1910 about the nature of religious faith.)

A word has already slipped from me that precipitates such comment as I want to make. I used, just now, the word 'interpretation'. In this story you had two people looking at the same scene and each seeing what the other saw. Or were they? They were, in the sense that there were no observable features of the scene that were known to the one and unknown to the other. But the two people come to different conclusions from what they see. Why? The difference cannot be settled by either's looking at the data more closely, because it is a difference in the interpretation of what each sees. But how do you settle between the two interpretations, how do you settle this sort of disagreement? If one is right, the other is wrong. But an interpretation of the facts, in this example, is not itself a fact, is not, that is, a something observed among the facts or alongside of the facts. Is it that the theist has an hallucination, or that the atheist is blind?

And here we are reminded of other sorts of similar disagreements. We may say to a young man, 'You are in love with an image. She isn't at all like what you think she is. She's tawdry and brittle and commonplace.' And feeling his love to be a madness,

we proceed to argue, and we know how this sort of talk goes. The lover may recognize what we do, but still love; and we may feel that it isn't he who is mad but we who are blind and cannot see what none the less is before our eyes, but what he can and does see. And we generalize sometimes and ask: 'Does love blind us, or does it sharpen our eyes?'

In other words, to come back to our first example, how do you set about deciding which way of construing the evidence is the right one—or of deciding what is relevant evidence—or of deciding what counts as evidence; when the construction isn't and can't be an item in the evidence (or the so-called evidence) along with other evidence?

Take another example—a common enough one, in all conscience. Suppose a man to say—as many people do with assurance, people, too, who are by no means philosophers—suppose a man to say that facts are simply contingent, that is, things just happen to be as they are; suppose him to be intellectually satisfied by this attitude of his, or to think that questions *Why?* are silly except in an empirical sense (are 'really' questions *How?*). Then so long as this attitude of his lasts, theistic argument will never get started. (In fact, it wouldn't be about theism that you would argue. You would recognize that the preliminaries, the presuppositions that gave sense and direction to theistic talk, weren't there. You would probably talk rather about positivism, or naturalism, in politics or law or ethics—or in whatever way you thought most appropriate for loosening up such a man's mind.) But, as I say, without these presuppositions, theistic talk wouldn't get under way. And why not? Because, and here I partly repeat myself, theistic argument, like ethical argument in some respects, isn't a vertical argument from something you know to something you had no idea of till the argument's conclusion revealed it to you; it is much more like the reading of signs in a certain light, or, if you prefer, more like the counting of such and such data as signs. But, in our example, whatever it is that precipitates a theistic interpretation of the data is completely to seek.

Let us turn to a further example of a similar sort of disagreement, and one that I again quote from Wisdom:

Suppose two people are looking at a picture or natural scene. One says 'Excellent' or 'Beautiful' or 'Divine'; the other says 'I don't see it.' He means he doesn't see the beauty. And this reminds us of how we felt the theist accuse the atheist of blindness and the

atheist accuse the theist of seeing what isn't there. And yet surely each sees what the other sees. It isn't that one can see part of the picture which the other can't see. So the difference is in a sense not one as to the facts. And so it cannot be removed by the one disputant discovering to the other what so far he hasn't seen. It isn't that the one sees the picture in a different light and so, as we say, sees a different picture. Consequently the difference between them cannot be resolved by putting the picture in a different light. And yet surely this is just what can be done in such a case—not by moving the picture but by talk perhaps. To settle a dispute as to whether a piece of music is good or better than another we listen again; with a picture we look again. Someone perhaps points to emphasize certain features and we see it in a different light. . . .

If, in spite of all this, we choose to say that a difference as to whether a thing is beautiful is not a factual difference then we must be careful to remember that there is a procedure for settling these differences, and that this consists not only in reasoning and re-description as in the legal case [of, e.g. whether Mr. So and so, of whose conduct we have so complete a record, did or did not exercise reasonable care], but also in a more literal re-setting-before, with re-looking or re-listening.

. . . Let us consider again the technique used in revealing or proving beauty, in removing a blindness, in inducing an attitude which is lacking, in reducing a reaction that is inappropriate. Besides running over in a special way the features of the picture—tracing the rhythms, making sure that this and not that are not only seen but noticed, and their relation to each other—besides all this, there are other things we can do to justify our attitude and alter that of the man who cannot see. For features of the picture may be brought out by setting beside it other pictures; just as the merits of an argument may be brought out, proved, by setting beside it other arguments, in which striking but irrelevant features of the original are changed and relevant features emphasized; just as the merits and demerits of a line of action may be brought out by setting beside it other actions. . . . This is the kind of thing we very often do when someone is 'inconsistent' or unreasonable.

In all this matter Wisdom is employing his customary manner of dialectical talk to loosen up some distinctions that philosophers use—distinctions like those of matters of fact and matters of words—and in part, I take it, he is inviting us to consider how we settle what in certain familiar cases is the right way of reading what we all see, or how we come to *appreciate* what previously we had seen and even noticed; or how we go about it when we are arguing that such and such an interpretation (in history, say) is reasonable, or even the only reasonable one.

And all these ways of settling such disagreements are much

nearer, in my opinion, to what goes on in theistic argument than any *soi-disant* deduction, in vertical fashion, from premises to conclusion. After all, this is how *in fact* we do argue matters with atheists or sceptics. We think they see the facts but not the meaning—or the facts but not the pattern of the facts. To put the matter crudely, we try to bring them to see the evidence in the proper light—in the light that brings it out most clearly—and in that light to appreciate it and to read it. This is surely the sort of argument that we carry on, whatever its metaphysical dress, whether florid or austere, and it's because we think there is a right way of interpreting what we all see that we think a sceptical outlook, which misses it, to be an unreasonable one.

But now, what sort of unreasonableness is this? Certainly, of course, it's something much more profound than the inability to agree in point of logic with a piece of linear inference. We say that the world which surrounds us, and particularly persons, ourselves as we know ourselves, are unintelligible—don't 'make sense'—on any other than a theistic interpretation. And a sceptic says, 'I don't see the need for this intelligibility of yours. You may think that Christian sanctity, say, doesn't make sense unless there is a God who can effectively love and be loved. But we have no need of that hypothesis. The data are all susceptible of quite another interpretation, or of several others, and I'm perfectly satisfied by a naturalistic one that has the further advantage of being minimal and economical.' Now how do we proceed? Is the concept of reasonableness or intelligibility itself a relative one? Is intelligibility in large part a matter of relating what we see to what is familiar, and does it therefore itself mean different things to people according to what sorts of pieces make up their own most familiar mental furniture? Or, to put it in terms of 'explanation', does 'explanation' in large measure consist of connecting what we want to explain with some familiar model of what is clear and intellectually satisfactory, or with some congenial 'picture preference'? Since these intellectual models vary from time to time, and in the history of metaphysics have varied much, is the process of *explaining* itself, therefore, a business in which there can be no finality?

There are some matters of logic, of course, behind some of these many questions. I am putting them only to incite ourselves to ask what it is that we do have in mind when we say that atheism isn't reasonable. (Incidentally, the fact that you cannot, perhaps, 'refute' a sceptic is neither here nor there, and doesn't raise a

special problem for theists. You cannot 'refute' a sceptic who consistently sticks to saying that he can never be sure whether it is in fact cheese that he sees in the larder. But what a man says may be silly even if it cannot be disproved.) What, then, do we have in mind?

This is a question to which we can give an answer by asking ourselves what unbelievers have in mind at the beginning of, and as controlling the direction of, those deliberations and reflexions and decisions in consequence of which they become Christians. I say 'at the beginning of, and as controlling the direction of', to indicate that this part of the process logically belongs to what we call 'natural theology'; it is not necessarily, of course, neatly classifiable as a beginning in point of chronological order, nor is it a stage, either, at which divine grace is marking time, so to speak, until the man has come to the bounds of revelation proper. And what goes on in the mind of the convert who becomes a Christian goes on in the minds of the rest of us who remain Christians, less obviously and dramatically perhaps.

Now it is very difficult to smooth away idiosyncrasies and differences and particular complexities and modulations. But I think that the traditional language is both the most accurate pointer to what goes on in such a mind and the most appropriate description of what it is. It is traditional to say that all arguments for the existence of God are so many variations on the theme of contingency: and the word 'contingency', which, like all words in this subject-matter, is used analogically, both marks the direction of the thought and is a word that we find appropriate as none other to describe what it feels like.

I am, as you will be quick to notice, using phrases whose vagueness, at first sight, may offend; I am using them deliberately. But let us take examples. To some people the authority of conscience suggests that any analysis of it that interprets it only in terms of man's prescribing a code of conduct for himself, or in terms of a system of attitudes or outlooks whose further investigation is the business of the psychologist or the sociologist, or is a merely positivist, descriptive account of it—the authority of conscience suggests to some people, as I say, that analyses of this sort simply do not do justice to the facts: they distort them or leave too much out, are insensitive or imperceptive even as descriptions. And contrariwise, a theistic interpretation of the authority of conscience, careful as one must be how one puts it and alert against short cuts, does seem to

do justice to the facts, to provide the most appropriate language: such an interpretation admitted, a man feels, as an Oxford colleague¹ of mine put it, that the mind has come home. For others, it is their experience of beauty that generates a similar experience; for others it may be a sense of the messiness of the world or of what man has made of man. What such people say may put up a philosopher's blood-pressure and may not do as it stands. But it is no use telling them that they think as they do because of (let us say) an unpurged remnant of platonism in their thought. They will, likely enough, reply to the sceptic: 'There may be, for all I know, no logical trays into which my utterances may be piled. Your clouds of analysis blur the shapes of what it is that I discern. But I know the thing is there, though I'm completely at a loss to know how to bring you into position for seeing it too.'

With others again, and with many—or most; this is, I fancy, the most important of the forms that this reflexion takes, which is just what one would naturally expect—with many, then, it is a sense of the tensions, in personal existence, between limitation and perfection, the sorts of tensions that are indicated, in images, by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Presumably there is no need to develop this.

As I said at the beginning, I am not discussing theistic argument itself, but the preliminaries to it. But I have arrived at what appears to me to make up at any rate the one preliminary without which theistic talk doesn't even make sense. With a person who has no sense of contingency, however it comes about, theistic discussions will hardly get under way. And, as is clear, theistic metaphysics does not argue *to* contingency; it proceeds *from* it in a theistic direction. We stand on the shore and look out to sea.

There are two or three further observations that I should like to make before going on. The first is this. I have spoken of a 'sense of contingency': I don't, of course, mean an emotion or a sentiment; I mean something intellectual (though with roots in emotions), something best described, perhaps, as a disposition. It is, at any rate as I know it, a disposition to recognize the creatureliness primarily of ourselves—our freedom and our agency—and then of those tracts of the world in which, by training or temperament or special gifts, we are most vividly interested. And if you ask me what are the marks of this recognition of creatureliness, I should

¹ Mr. Ian Crombie, Fellow of Wadham College, to whom, and to Dr. Austin Farrer, of Trinity College, I am indebted for several expressions in these pages.

say they are two. One, that in reading ourselves and our experience as creaturely, in construing them as signs that point in the direction of God as somehow the Prime Mover behind them—or as the *rerum tenax vigor* or as the stress and thrust and stack of being, as Hopkins might have put it, or as Pure Act and Necessary Being—however we put it, we are confident that we are doing justice to them, interpreting them in the one way that takes into account the individual complexity of what they are: we feel the mind has come home. Two, which is simply consequential on the first, we are aware that other, let us say simple positivistic, interpretations of them are either just inadequate or are forcing them into a bed of Procrustes.

This second point calls for a little further comment. If a man sticks to some other interpretation of what we say cries out for a theistic interpretation, how we do proceed with him and, if we are, as in charity we probably are, wanting to persuade him that he is wrong and we are right, of what sort are our expectations of succeeding? Our first, routine, moves are, no doubt, attempts to pounce on and show up formal inconsistencies in his interpretation. This usually takes us very little way or no way at all. Or we may try to underline ambiguities and muddles. This again, if a man is sophisticated enough, will often take us little forwarder. Or we may then go on to maintain that the interpretation he makes is inconsistent with outlooks that he has or ideals or policies of action or habitual ways of feeling when he is not philosophizing, when he is thinking off the record. But here, again, a sophisticated person is proof against us. In the event I doubt if we can ever formally disprove an atheist, still less a consistent sceptical, interpretation and outlook; in the end we find ourselves acting like Wisdom's two people who disagreed about a painting, where the one said, 'That's beautiful,' and the other said, 'I don't see it.' We present and represent facts that we are both aware of, try to shift the light in which he sees them, emphasize such and such facts to make sure that they are not only seen and noticed but weighed. We try to get him to do justice to what we both see, for we think him blind, whereas he thinks us credulous or, it may be, superstitious or resistant to intellectual change; and what *we* call doing justice to the facts *he* calls the grip on us of settled routines or inertia.

This is how the discussion goes, and there is a logic in its going like this. It is mightily more difficult and complex than it is when two people are discussing a picture. The reason at bottom for this difference is obvious. Short of the verification of divine love by

Christ and of Christ's showing what divine love is like and what God is like, and short of knowing, to some extent, what divine love is like and what God is like in a Christian life seriously lived, short of this we don't in a sense know what we are talking about when we talk about God. We don't know what God's love, say, is like, in the sense that we don't know what it's like to love as God does or to be active as God is active: we cannot know, because we are not and cannot be God. The problem of talking about God at all is an old one, and has lost nothing of its force; for contemporary philosophers it is crucial. And this is why, although a discussion of a theistic interpretation of ourselves and the world is to some extent like a discussion of this or that historical interpretation of such and such items of evidence, or like a discussion of what a friend of ours was about when he did this or that which is reported to us—although there are likenesses between the two sorts of discussion, there are also flagrant differences. To our historical studies we bring our wisdom or unwisdom about human nature, and to our consideration of our friend's doings we bring our greater or less knowledge of him. When we talk about painting we can contrast as well as compare: we can compare Cézanne with Poussin and contrast him with Caravaggio. But we cannot contrast some aspect of reality that is creaturely with one that is not, any more than we can contrast some area of life in which divine activity or divine love is operative with some area in which it is not. It cannot be done, and yet, in most discussions of this sort, which proceed by comparisons and contrasts, the ability to make such comparisons is indispensable if we are to let the other side know what we mean by the words we use.

A recognition of creatureliness, when it is explicit and aware of itself, is no doubt already a recognition of dependence, in some sense, on God, and therefore a recognition of God. The premise is already the conclusion. The job of theistic argument is, presumably, to make an inchoate, or, rather, vague, recognition of creatureliness aware of itself, explicit. But if there is nothing to start on, there is nothing to make articulate, and if a man hasn't in some sense or in some degree what I have called a sense of contingency, there isn't any springboard for theistic metaphysics. How do you produce this sense in one who hasn't got it? Well, how do you induce a way of seeing? I doubt whether its production is the job of what we call theistic metaphysics, because 'a way of seeing' is presupposed by natural theology. Perhaps, however,

even in its para-geometrical form and all its apparatus of deductive argument, some traditional metaphysics has been trying so to redirect attention that what is seen is also noticed and the signs are read. But traditional metaphysics has proceeded about this, if this is what it was doing, in a very odd way. And I must confess that in my own experience I have found it singularly unsuccessful. After all, how would one expect it to soften up a monolithic materialist like H. G. Wells or an anti-humanist like Picasso or a happy naturalist like Fred Hoyle? The examples are not chosen flippan tly. But I'm not sure how you *do* set about it, or how best you set about it. However, Aristotle thought that philosophizing started out from wonder, and I suspect that it isn't so much the difficulties of logical theory that stand in the light, however much one recognizes such difficulties, or even the empiricist programme that draws up the agenda for at any rate some (but not all) contemporary logical method; in some measure, and I think it is a large measure, I suspect that the logical theories, for all the good and ill they have done (and for all that they are to be discussed, of course, only on their intrinsic merits), none the less get under way and take the direction that they do, because the sort of wonder from which metaphysics is supposed to start is no longer there. The *Zeitgeist* is against it.

To put it another way, and as Dr. Austin Farrer put it, we are suffering not from too much logic but from too little contemplation. What do I mean by this? Well, I have myself much admiration for Professor Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*. But controlling his analysis is a definite idea of what human nature is like—the human nature that exercises proficiencies and skills from having learnt them, that keeps studied rules, and talks articulately or babblingly, whose goings-on are, and must only be, in principle, publicly testable.¹ And contrast this with the idea of human nature that you find in Gerard Manley Hopkins, not to take any examples further from home or other than I have used already. Or contrast with the idea of reality that you find in Dostoevski or Henry James or Baudelaire (I deliberately make up a strange trinity; perhaps the only thing they have in common is a feeling for the mystery of existence and a knowledge that they have never said the last word)—contrast with these, say, John Dos Passos or Wells or Dreiser: recollecting the shrewd criticism that

¹ And compare Professor Ryle's astonishing notion that human beings are in fact 'relatively tractable and relatively easy to understand' (*Ibid.*, p. 114).

Lionel Trilling made about Steinbeck, for it can be made of many of our contemporaries:

John Steinbeck [he comments] is generally praised both for his reality and his warmheartedness, but in *The Wayward Bus* the lower-class characters receive a doctrinaire affection in proportion to the suffering and sexuality which define their existence, while the ill-observed middle-class characters are made to submit not only to moral judgement but to the withdrawal of all fellow-feeling, being mocked for their very misfortunes and almost for their susceptibility to death. *Only a little thought or even less feeling is required to perceive that the basis of his creation is the coldest response to abstract ideas.*¹

And as the same critic observes elsewhere², at every point of conclusion in such writing, we feel the Steinbecks and the rest feel that they have said the last word.

We are now, as you see, beginning to discuss the ideas of reality that underlie certain contemporary novels and even their relation to the form of these novels. Is this an irrelevance or a digression in a paper given by a philosopher and supposed to have a bearing on theism and contemporary logic? Not in the least. It is no more irrelevant or digressive or even marginal matter than it would be if I went on—but I can't, since time, too, goes on as well as I—to talk about the embarrassment, or even revulsion, that people feel about Pre-Raphaelite painting (though in this matter certain canonical standards are now beginning to give way); or about the sort of imagination—the kind of perception of human nature—that Picasso represents. No, to talk about painting and why humanist painting is no longer a natural expression of our artists would not be marginal to my subject but central.

Odds and ends of theory about science, a monolatry of scientific method and procedures, odds and ends of crudely grasped Freudianism, fag-ends of anthropology, Empiricist hangovers, a phobia about appearing to be unsophisticated, and so on and so on—it is these rather than philosophical or logical procedures that have contributed to the development of the sort of positivism that thinks it silly to ask questions *Why?* except in a scientific or sociological or psychological, etc., sense. And if you are to soften up positivism, you cannot do it, as I have said, by trying to make out that a positivistic interpretation of what we all see is inconsistent or refutable: it cannot be done; you can, in the end, only go on repeating that it doesn't do justice to

¹ *The Liberal Imagination*, p. 217; my italics.

² *Ibid.*, p. 297.

the facts, and try to show why. (And at this point I would interject that the facts include the history of the Jews and Messianic prophecy and the events of the New Testament.) But if your interlocutor says, 'Why on earth doesn't it do justice to the facts? Why on earth peddle mysteries where there aren't any?' the best one can try to do is to inject back again into him, and into the air, what is at the moment far to seek, humanism and indeed romanticism. Certain procedures and techniques wither the imagination, as John Stuart Mill knew, and perhaps the worst feature of 'modern philosophy' has been what Dr. Friedrich Waismann has himself called its clarity-neurosis: the sort of clarity it pursues (and it has been assumed that clarity is only of one sort) tends to paralyse imagination in its practitioners. And that is why *I* think that it is far from being marginal to the issues we are concerned with to talk about poetry or novels or plays or about painting, or about politics or what we expect of political action. It is central.

And, if earlier things that I said were anywhere near the target, this is just what you would expect. Because metaphysics isn't a special kind of science, even if metaphysics has sometimes dressed up to look like deduction or induction. It isn't science at all. It isn't poetry either. But like poetry it lives only on analogical thinking, and like poetry and the bible it employs images—the bible openly, metaphysics covertly. And like poetry, and like ethics, it doesn't claim to discover new facts that we didn't know before—and yet, in a way, it does: in the way in which Shakespeare does or Velasquez does. You don't see new things—and yet you do, by seeing the old things in a new way, in a way that brings out their savour and their 'own sakes'.

This, I take it, is metaphysical contemplation, different from but akin to the other kinds I have been talking of; what, earlier on, I called the business of interpreting, which is not itself a fact discovered among the other items of the evidence.

And if what we suffer from is not excess of logic but defect of contemplation, as I'm sure it is, then we don't find the therapy in more logic but in more contemplation. And if contemplation is in part the appreciation of our human condition (and if we cannot appreciate that, in ourselves, we shall not appreciate anything), the work of the artists and of the writers is every bit as important as the work of the philosophers. A net result of modern work in philosophy has been to put philosophy firmly in its place. It is high time. Or so I think. It is also in an old, and good, tradition.

MACHIAVELLI AND THE ITALIAN TRADITION

By BERNARD WALL

MACHIAVELLI'S appearance was fascinating. I cannot forget his face when I read his works. The two are inseparable. I am thinking of the well-known portrait by Santi di Tito di Borgo San Sepolcro in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, here reproduced.¹ One sees immediately how the legend of Old Nick grew. He is extremely thin. His flesh adheres to his skull and follows its contours; large forehead, emaciated and ascetical cheeks. But the thin tight lips curling upwards in a satirical grin remove all thoughts of asceticism. It is a diabolical grin. And the face is that of a man of the highest intelligence of the negative and destructive kind. Machiavelli looks, and is, narrow-minded or blinkered. We see brilliance of intellect combined with emotional aridity and lack of human sympathy or heart. And in Santi di Tito's portrait there emerge from his monkish dress the hands of a butcher.

The other great writer who grinned was Voltaire, but Machiavelli's grin is incomparably sinister. Like Voltaire, Machiavelli has an expression that is queerly familiar and haunting. It is a face one has seen somewhere. I think I know the explanation of this. The portrait of Machiavelli is a pulled-out caricature of a certain type of person to be seen in Tuscany. You see them in the train or the village shop. There is the Tuscan 'knowingness' and sharpness of wit, the absence of illusions about mankind, the inclination to suppose that men generally act from the worst motives, the determination never to be a dupe. The determination never to be a dupe is widespread to a fault in Italy, and it can be the cause of false judgments. Whereas Englishmen in society are given to a kind of hypocrisy whose grounds are moral,

¹ In *The Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli*, translated from the Italian with an Introduction, Chronological Tables and Notes by Leslie J. Walker, S.J., Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2 vols., £5 5s. (Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science.)

Italians, who rarely understand hypocrisy, tend to state what is on their minds in the boldest and most cynical-sounding terms possible. Machiavelli was typically Italian in this.

It would be easy to be involved in debate as to which great artist or which great poet or writer most typified the spirit of the Renaissance in Italy. Amongst artists Raphael, Michelangelo, Benvenuto Cellini and several others would find their supporters. Amongst writers claims could be made for Ariosto or Pietro Bembo, for Poliziano or Aretino or Bandello. But in the field of political writing Machiavelli seems almost the incarnation of the spirit of his age.

By the fourteenth century the Communes of Northern and Central Italy had fallen and in their stead there were innumerable petty tyrants. Of these, the Medici in Florence, commercial by origin, were, by and large, the most humane. Others, such as the Sforza and Visconti in Milan or the Malatesta in Rimini, combined in almost unique degree the habits of splendour, cruelty and dissoluteness. In England King Henry VIII or some of the Elizabethan courtiers had something of the spirit of the Italian Renaissance. But we need only compare King Henry VIII with Sigismondo Malatesta, the Condottiere of Rimini, to see what a world of difference there is between the perverted English moralist and the Italian a-moralist. Sigismondo was convicted of murder, rape, adultery, incest, sacrilege, perjury and treason—crimes committed not once but on many occasions. But—typical of the Renaissance Princes—his complete indifference to morals went with a most refined taste in the arts. Humanists found refuge at his court, held their symposia in his presence and celebrated his beautiful Isotta in their Latin verses. He built the delightful Tempio Malatestiano and was painted by Piero della Francesca.¹

The Renaissance tyrants lived in a chronic atmosphere of war and intrigue against one another. In the fourteenth century Northern Italy and Tuscany were well ahead of the rest of Europe in wealth and all the arts of civilization. But in the second half of that century the writing of fate was already visible on the wall. The fall of Constantinople and the discovery of America shifted the centre of civilization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Moreover, the unsettled state of Italy brought in the French, the Spanish and the Germans, who fought out their battles there in ever-changing alliances with different Italian States. The tyrants,

¹ Burkhardt.

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who had obtained power, or maintained it, by force and fraud, lolled back in their wealth and artistic luxury, and they and the Republics hired foreign soldiers to fight their battles for them. The Swiss became famous in mercenary warfare because they were better drilled and more loyal than Italians. But the literature of the period is full of all kinds of complaints against the mercenaries. In their own interests they made war as bloodless as possible; and civilian employers complained that their mercenaries were not fighting and killing hard enough, or that their battles were pre-arranged as theatre pieces to take in the non-military mind. Not unnaturally the mercenaries preferred soaking rich civilians to killing one another.

The political changes that occurred during Machiavelli's lifetime were very extensive and it is difficult to give a coherent picture of them. He was born in 1467 in Florence, and after the expulsion of the Medici and the establishment of the Republic (which was inspired by Savonarola) he was employed as Secretary and Chancellor. He was thus in public life from 1498 to 1512. Savonarola was burnt at the instigation of Pope Alexander VI the year Machiavelli took office. The Republic was shaken by factions within and threatened by the Medici without. Louis XII of France conquered the Milanese and divided Naples with Spain. The temporal power of the Papacy was much strengthened by Alexander VI, and the whole of Italy rang with the unscrupulous exploits of his son, Cesare Borgia, who, with his Papal father's support, carved out a dukedom in Romagna. Pope Julius II—a ferocious old warrior and art connoisseur, who led his troops to battle personally, overworked Michelangelo and started building the present St. Peter's—succeeded Pope Alexander after a short interval. He called on France, Spain and the Empire to wage war with him against Venice. The fight was not unnaturally followed by a struggle between France and Spain. Machiavelli was a frequent Ambassador to the King of France, to the Emperor, to Cesare Borgia and to other potentates. But his term of office came to an end with the collapse of the Florentine Republic in 1512. The Medici brothers, including Cardinal Giovanni Medici who shortly afterwards became Pope as Leo X, returned with the assistance of the Spaniards. Machiavelli's practical efforts were not very successful. The *Ordinanza* (a militia he had specially organized) failed to put up any resistance against the invaders. Machiavelli now tried to curry favour with the new masters of Florence, but every

attempt failed, he was dismissed from all his offices and subsequently arrested and interrogated (i.e. tortured). Upon his release he retired to the country at San Casciano near Florence, where he spent most of his remaining years. When the Medici were once again expelled from Florence he made renewed efforts to resume public life. But during the interval he had tried so hard to conciliate the Medici that his appeals were understandably rejected. He died in 1527.

In an age of Ciceronians, Machiavelli, like Cicero, prided himself on his political and practical sense, but—again like Cicero—were it not for his writings he would have long been forgotten. Before I come to the *Discourses*, the subject of this article, I would like to say a little about works that are better known, and the general conditions that inspired him. His two masterpieces are the famous *Principe*, or Prince, and a stage comedy—*La Mandragola*—which occupies a special place in Italian literature because the Italians have produced fewer first-class plays than other peoples. The *Principe*, as is well known, was an outcome of Machiavelli's admiration for the career of Cesare Borgia which he had already revealed in an earlier writing with the significant title of *Descrizione del Modo Tenuto dal Duca Valentino nello Ammazzare Vitelozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, il Signor Pagolo e il Duca di Gravina Orsini* (A description of the method pursued by the Duke of Valentinois for the killing of Vitelozzo Vitelli, etc., etc.) In the *Principe* Machiavelli set down all his essential ideas about politics. His view is aristocratic—his interest is to strengthen the 'head', the 'great man' against the vulgar herd—yet also passionately patriotic. He aimed at redeeming Italy from disunion and building up a strong military force which could defeat the most famous soldiers of Europe. All means are legitimate for establishing the power of the prince. Faith, integrity and goodness are subordinated to the principal aim of the prince. They only have a purpose if they do not interfere with the concentration of energy for the achievement of power.

In the *Principe* and in his *Arte della Guerra* (The *Art of War*, a typically Renaissance symposium in which, amongst other proposals, he advocated conscription from the age of seventeen to forty and the formation of a State militia) Machiavelli is said to have shown his bias against literary and artistic humanism. This view is exaggerated, as in his epoch it was impossible not to view life in terms of art. But he complained that the Italian princes

were more warlike than artistic. He returned to this charge in the *Discourses*:

When I consider in what honour antiquity is held, and how—to cite but one instance—a bit of an old statue has fetched a high price that someone may have it by him to give honour to his house and that it may be possible for it to be copied by those who are keen on this art . . . and when, on the other hand, I notice that what history has to say about the highly virtuous actions performed by ancient kingdoms and republics, by their kings, their generals, their citizens their legislators . . . is rather admired than imitated: nay, is so shunned by everybody in each little thing they do, that of the virtue of bygone days there remains no trace, it cannot but fill me at once with astonishment and grief.

No translation, however accurate, can render the richness of Machiavelli's style. He was a writer of superb artistry, and his Florentine birth bequeathed him the pure Tuscan language which so many writers from other parts of Italy have found it difficult to acquire. Nor was he indifferent to the perennial Italian problem of the theory of language. Like Dante long before him and like Manzoni long after him, he wrote a treatise on this subject (*The Discorso or Dialogo intorno alla nostra Lingua*) in which he ascribed Dante's rejection of the pure spoken language of Florence to the lack of patriotism that he showed so often in the *Divine Comedy*.

Even his essay on language and his historical writings are dyed with his political sentiments, and the only works that appear to belong entirely to another field are his comedies, *Cliizia* and *La Mandragola*. (He also wrote some poems, but these are of very secondary interest, perhaps because his critical and destructive intelligence was only made to tackle satire in that field.) Of all comedies ever written in Italy *La Mandragola* is perhaps the nearest in spirit to the comedy of the English Elizabethans, and there is little doubt that the latter owe much to it. Machiavelli was free from that rigid imitation of the Latins which (added to an artificial blank verse form) spoils the comedies of Ariosto. For power and pungency *La Mandragola* could hardly be outclassed. But when we compare it with the work of Shakespeare, or even Jonson, we are struck by one major difference. *La Mandragola* is a comedy of Florentine manners in the style of Boccaccio. It is the story of a young girl married to an impotent old man who wants offspring, of the plot between the girl and her young lover to deceive the old man—and of the help they are given by their friends and by a

villainously hypocritical friar who splits wonderful theological hairs. Superb artistry is employed to express an outlook that is negative and destructive, and Machiavelli's licentiousness makes Jonson's famous bawdiness sound simple and childish. The conclusion we must draw from this, as from the comparison between Henry VIII and Sigismondo Malatesta, is, I think, that in Italy the Renaissance went far deeper than it did in other countries. Not only were Italians better educated than the more primitive Northern peoples. For Italians by and large, the resurrection of classical literature and art went hand in hand with the resurrection of classical paganism. The ancient gods were—as they still are—in some way alive in their original homeland. When I say that moral virtues were at a low ebb amongst the educated classes, I do not mean that 'demoralization' affected the common people. Then, as now, they lived frugal and hardworking lives, and in the country they practised the virtues that we associate with the Georgics of Virgil.

Machiavelli wrote his *Discourses*—their full title is translated as *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*—at his country house at San Casciano. They cover much the same ground as the *Principe*, though in a different manner. They have less the style of a political pamphlet, they lack the white-hot passion of the *Principe*, and they are somewhat more Republican in outlook. As Fr. Walker points out, Machiavelli's method consists in selecting 'incidents from Livy's narrative, usually in chronological order' and using them 'as pegs on which to hang some theorem which the narrative has suggested to him'. His study of ancient Roman history—the first ten books of Livy deal with events between 753 B.C. and 293 B.C.—has the practical aim of finding out the causes of Roman greatness and applying them to the Italy of the time. His historical comments, as in the *Principe*, move easily from ancient to modern instances, and his historical and psychological generalizations and maxims are written in the same spirit, e.g.: 'Should a people accustomed to live under a prince by any eventuality become free, they will with difficulty maintain their freedom' (D.I.16). 'A prince cannot live securely in a principality whilst those are alive who have been despoiled of it' (D.III.4). 'Men never do any good except through necessity' (D.I.3). 'Men rise from a low to a great position by means rather of fraud than of force' (D.II.13). 'A sudden transition from humility to pride or from kindness to cruelty . . . is both imprudent and futile' (D.I.41).

'A Republic or a prince should ostensibly do out of generosity what necessity constrains them to do.' 'It is a glorious thing to use fraud in the conduct of war', and so on. Many of these sayings are variants of the maxims of *Il Principe*, viz. that 'a prince ought not to keep faith when its observances can be turned against him' or else that 'Frightfulness [*Crudeltà*] may be said to be well used—if of evil it be permissible to speak well—when it is applied at one go, is necessary to one's security, and is not persisted in afterwards unless it can be turned to the advantage of one's subjects'. 'By *crudeltà*', explains Fr. Walker, 'is meant the kind of thing done by Agathocles, who killed all the senators of Syracuse and the richest of the people; by Oliverotto da Fermo, who murdered his uncle and the magnates of Fermo at a banquet; by Cesare Borgia, who enticed his officers (who had rebelled but were now reconciled) to Sinigaglia and killed them either outright or shortly afterwards.'

There is some doubt about the extent of Machiavelli's classical learning, whether he knew Greek and so on—he himself referred to his 'feeble knowledge of antiquity'—but his attitude to the Latin classics and to ancient Rome was typical of the Italian Renaissance. It is not easy to understand the excesses of the Italian humanists, as humanists in other countries, Montaigne in France, for instance, or Bacon in England, were altogether more moderate. For Machiavelli—who was by no means the most extreme example in Italy—ancient Rome was in every way superior to the Christian world that had succeeded it. He treated the classical Latin writers rather as St. Thomas Aquinas treated the Bible, and one sometimes feels that, like other Renaissance writers, he was well on the way to making a religion of pure secularism based on the sacred books of the antique world in the way in which Communism is based on the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. It seems to me that it is no accident that Machiavelli's commentary on Livy should take precisely the same form as commentaries of Scripture. In a well-known letter to a friend Machiavelli describes how he spent his days in his house at San Casciano, partly reading Dante, Petrarch and the minor Latin poets, partly at the local tavern drinking and gaming. But in the evenings he threw off his stained daytime clothes and robed himself finely and entered his library like a priest going to the altar—there to spend happy hours with the great Roman historians and political writers, who were in his eyes the masters of all knowledge.

His curious attitude to religion is revealed in the comments

devoted to it in the first book of the *Discourses*. It is something of a mixture. Upon occasion he adopted the tone of the anti-clericalism that has existed in Italy from time immemorial—Dante and Boccaccio had it, and it is to be found in Rome or Milan today. It consists in contrasting Christian ideals with the behaviour of priests. Machiavelli disliked his contemporary Savonarola intensely, but on the subject of the morals of the Court of Rome there was little difference in what they said:

If such a religious spirit had been kept up by the rulers of the Christian commonwealth as was ordained for us by its founder, Christian states and Republics would have been much more united and much more happy than they are. Nor if one would form a conjecture of the causes of its decline could one do better than look at the peoples who live in the immediate neighbourhood of the Church of Rome, which is the head of our religion, and see how there is less religion amongst them than elsewhere. . . . Owing to the bad example set by the court of Rome, Italy has lost all devotion and all religion. . . . The first debt that we Italians owe to the Church and to priests, therefore, is that we have become irreligious and perverse.

So far so good. But Machiavelli now goes on to press home a point which, we feel, is nearer to his heart:

But we owe them a yet greater debt, which is the second cause of our ruin. It is the Church that has kept, and keeps, Italy divided. . . . For though the Church has its headquarters in Italy and has temporal power, neither its power nor its virtue have been sufficiently great for it to be able to subjugate Italian tyrants and make itself their prince: nor yet, on the other hand, has it been so weak that it could not, when afraid of losing its dominion over things temporal, call on one of the powers to defend it against an Italian state that had become too powerful. . . .

Machiavelli was in no sense opposed to the existence of religion as such. He admired alike the religion of the ancient Romans and the religion of the contemporary Swiss, because Roman paganism and Swiss Catholicism produced good and loyal soldiers. In other words, he judged religion like everything else by whether it benefited the State and furthered the end of *virtù* (the moral quality he most admired). An interesting sidelight on his attitude to the Papacy is to be found in the famous chapter in the *Principe* in which he describes the achievements of Cesare Borgia and explains why he failed in the end. Cesare Borgia, as I have already pointed out, had the admirable plan of using the Papacy—and

the convenient fact that his father was Pope—so as to establish a strong secular State in Italy by a brilliant career of conquests. Unfortunately, at a critical moment, his father, Pope Alexander VI, died. Cesare Borgia now felt the full disadvantage of being the offspring of a monarchy based on the elective rather than the hereditary principle. His only hope lay in using his conquests to see to it that the succeeding Pope would be favourable to his interests. In this he might well have succeeded had he not, as Machiavelli points out regrettably, fallen ill himself. But even after the collapse of the Borgias there still seemed a hope of secularizing the Papacy by means of the Medici, and Machiavelli thought of dedicating the *Principe* to Giuliano de' Medici the brother of Pope Leo X. In other words, had it been possible to use the religious strength of the Papacy so as to establish a strong Italian State Machiavelli would presumably have approved.

I have said that Machiavelli subordinated all else to the aims of statecraft and *virtù*—these were the ends that justified the means. As Fr. Walker points out, *virtù* is the operative word in the whole of Machiavelli's system. But by it he did not mean virtue in the Christian sense—the sense the word bears in all modern languages. He used it as equivalent to the classical latin *virtus*—with the meaning of 'strength', 'efficiency', 'manliness' and 'patriotism'. In other words, in the field of ethics he substituted for the Christian conception an ancient Roman conception. Indeed he underlined this point when he complained that 'Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative men rather than men of action; and has assigned as man's highest good humility, abnegation and contempt for mundane things, whereas paganism identifies it with magnanimity, bodily strength and everything else that tends to encourage great boldness.' It was this concept of *virtù* that Nietzsche admired so much. But though Nietzsche was to some extent inspired by Machiavelli, at least as regards his concept of Renaissance 'princes' who were 'beyond good and evil', and were giants in comparison with the Christian 'pygmies' he detested, it would be quite erroneous to draw any close parallel between these two thinkers. For Nietzsche had the feelings of a moralist, and with moral fervour he erected 'a-moralism' into a cosmic metaphysical theory, and force and will-power became for him a primary factor in the constitution of the universe. Machiavelli was in no sense a philosopher, and from the metaphysical point of view his mind was a complete vacuum. He was only concerned with

how men in fact behave, with finding out the invariable causes in history and politics that would produce determined results. Rather than a philosopher he was a 'scientist of politics'.

I said at the beginning of this essay that there was something typically Italian about Machiavelli. But I wish to be careful here. For to each country in Europe particular vices have been ascribed by their neighbours. And just as the Spaniards are said to be proud and cruel or the English hypocritical, so for centuries the Italians have been called Machiavellian. The name Machiavelli was employed by people who had never read a line of the Florentine's works, to connote treachery, 'stabbing in the back', lying and deceit. As Fr. Walker points out, 'Machiavellianism' was freely ascribed to the Jesuits, though Machiavelli's works were placed on the Vatican Index of prohibited books.

I think it would be much more accurate to look on Machiavelli as a child of the Italian Renaissance who, in a brilliant and unique way, made articulate the mood of his time. The Renaissance, and also the Counter-Reformation which succeeded it, were factors in the making of modern Italy in the sense in which Puritanism was a factor in the making of modern England. Time and time again, during the Fascist epoch in Italy, pronouncements were made which echoed the sayings of Machiavelli. But this was not necessarily because the Fascist leaders studied Machiavelli's technique, but because they inherited the cynicism about moral values in politics which have by now become a permanent current in Italian thinking, and expressed this cynicism spontaneously. In all countries history repeats itself, though never in quite the same way. Time and time again in Italian history there has been heard the complaint that Italians are too easygoing, that they lack the aggressive spirit, even (I recall well-known statements by Benito Mussolini) that they could manage with fewer works of art in exchange for aggressiveness in war. Time and time again there have been movements for resurrecting the glorious past of ancient Rome. These outbursts of rhetoric about it have a certain emotional appeal to Italians, though they may listen to the speeches with their tongues in their cheeks and only enjoy them as they enjoy the imbroglino of an opera by Verdi.

But these movements, like Fascism itself, have been comparatively short-lived in Italian history. When I say that Machiavelli was very Italian I am thinking of a sentiment that has been widespread amongst the Italian people for centuries. It is not merely

because he was a magnificent writer that Machiavelli is excused in Italy as in no other country. I think it is because, wherever one goes in Italy, one meets with people in every class of society who—irrespective of whether they have read Machiavelli or not, and irrespective of their views about morality—are profoundly convinced that the 'Machiavellian' explanation of the motives and conduct of politicians is true. But the commonest conclusion that people draw from the conviction that there is no morality in politics is not Machiavelli's conclusion. Instead they argue something as follows: 'Yes, that is how politicians behave. They are out for themselves and for their own ambitions and to increase their wealth. They want to use us for their purposes. We for our part must distrust them and escape from their power and defeat their ends in every possible way. We must keep our money safe from the tax-gatherer and our lives safe from the recruiting officer.' It is exactly the attitude that Machiavelli deplored in his own time. But it is hard to see how, in terms of his principles, he could refute it and show that the peasant who distrusted Cesare Borgia was less wise than the soldier who fought for him.

Of course Machiavelli's answer to this is that only a strong man could save Italy from poverty and foreign rule. This argument cannot produce a moral imperative for obeying the State, and here I think we can see how partial and limited Machiavelli's outlook was. Moreover, even if we leave aside all metaphysical and moral considerations, as Fr. Walker points out, Machiavelli's views can be challenged on his own grounds of expediency. Machiavelli wished to raise the *morale* of Italy, to restore the old Roman *morale*. But though he realized that from the point of view of public *morale* his own age could be called decadent, he did not realize that he himself was decadent in fundamentally the same way as his age; and that to treat of politics in terms of pure expediency utterly divorced from morality—thus undermining the fundamental conceptions of law—was a point of view quite alien to the mentality of the early and regenerate Romans whose *morale* he wished to restore. The argument against saying that the end justifies the means is that a bad means puts a good end quite beyond attainment. Clever and treacherous rulers who seek for short cuts to power have been a constant danger in Italy, but the worst effects of their mistakes have always been parried by the solid sense of the common people who refuse to believe in them beyond a limited point.

VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

By LEONARD WALTON

I

IT is just over fifty years since the death of Vladimir Solovyov, the great Russian philosopher and theosophist. He died lonely, in a sombre, pessimistic mood, misunderstood alike in Russia and in Europe. Born before his time, he died on the threshold of our twentieth century, many of whose torturing dilemmas he prophetically divined. During the past half-century his fame and influence have steadily increased in religious and intellectual circles, particularly among 'Oecumenical Christians', who claim him as a prophet of an invisible 'Oecumenical Church' based upon a Christocentric humanism and raised above all the historical churches. Such is the point of view of Professor S. L. Frank, whose *Solovyov Anthology*¹ (excellently translated by Natalie Duddington) gathers together much material hitherto unavailable in English and includes an admirable introduction to Solovyov's general outlook.

Solovyov was a man of many brilliant parts—philosopher, theologian, historian, mystic, poet, critic, letter-writer and journalist. He initiated the strong reaction among the Russian intelligentsia against the positivist, utilitarian and rationalist obscurantism prevalent in Russia since the 'sixties. He thus helped to usher in the spiritual and artistic Renaissance which bloomed like an Indian summer in the last declining years of the Tsarist Empire. Then again, he stands out as the first and greatest of Russian religious philosophers—the *fons et origo* of all subsequent Russian religious thought. He was in no sense a professional, academic or systematic philosopher. On the contrary, his philosophy is essentially intuitive, visionary, dynamic. His style is fresh and personal, elegant and urbane, splendidly lucid, shot through with a faintly feminine romantic charm, lit up with flashes of poetry and mysticism, delicately sensitive to the ultimate mysteries of existence. He has increasingly been hailed as a man with a special, almost providential

¹ S.C.M. Press, 18s.

message for our distracted age, reintegrating philosophical, scientific and religious truth in a comprehensive synthesis, reconciling our social, national and ecclesiastical divisions, mediating between Russia and Europe, between East and West. As the prophet of universal harmony, he has aroused an ever-widening interest since Michel d'Herbigny, S.J., first introduced him to the European public in his *V. Soloviev, un Newman russe* (1911), a work very useful in its day, but somewhat marred by a too overtly apologetic intention. His more important works—*Lectures on Godmanhood, Russia and the Universal Church*, and *Three Conversations*—have been made available in English translation. Meanwhile, several scholarly studies (notably by Kozhevnikov, Mochulsky, Strémoukhoff, Muckermann) have thrown more light upon the deeper significance of Solovyov's life and thought. Of course, Catholics, Orthodox, even Theosophists and Anthroposophists (like Rudolf Steiner) have endeavoured to interpret Solovyov in their own terms; but in the last analysis he eludes all such attempts at distortion and appropriation. As a thinker, he remains eclectic, contradictory, full of unresolved antinomies and perplexing obscurities. As a person, he becomes strangely complex, subtle, evasive, enigmatic.

II

Vladimir Solovyov was born in Moscow in 1853. His father, Sergey Solovyov, was the famous historian of Russia—remote, strict, devout and patriotic. His mother, who had Ukrainian and Polish blood in her veins, was shy, modest, imaginative, self-sacrificing. From his father Solovyov is said to have inherited his zeal for knowledge, his scholarly application, his religious earnestness; while from his mother he may have derived his Little-Russian humour, his passionate imaginative and mystical temperament, his sympathy for Poland and Catholicism, and, lastly, his dark hair and swarthy complexion. The home atmosphere was cultured, pious, almost monastic. Solovyov was an unusual child—rather solitary, vividly imaginative, *rêveur*, passionate and extreme by temperament, profoundly reflective and brilliantly precocious. At the age of nine he had his first mystical experience at Solemn High Mass on the feast of the Ascension. Priest, assistants and congregation dissolved away in an azure and golden haze, he tells us, and a beautiful lady with a radiant smile, and carrying an un-

earthly flower, appeared before him and nodded to him. This mysterious being he was later to call St. Sophia, Holy Wisdom, the divine glory of the cosmos.

His adolescence and youth coincided with the period of intellectual and political unrest in Russia which followed the social reforms of the 'Tsar-Liberator' Alexander II. The triumvirate of Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov and Pisarev dominated the Russian intelligentsia. Its idols were Darwin, Renan, Feuerbach and, above all, Büchner, author of *Kraft und Stoff*. It was an age of atheistic humanism and dogmatic, uncritical materialism. As Solovyov later ironically remarked, it was 'the age of the change of the two catechisms, when the absolute authority of the Metropolitan Philaret was suddenly replaced by the equally absolute authority of Ludwig Büchner'. It was an age with a naïve faith in the boundless possibilities of natural science, in progress and evolution—a faith based upon the preposterous syllogism later amusingly formulated by Solovyov: 'Man is a hairless monkey; therefore he must lay down his life for his friends.' Solovyov's first encounter with this intellectual atmosphere at school plunged him into a long, painful period of rebellious negation and 'god-struggling'. A typical Nihilist of the 'sixties, he became a positivist, a materialist and an atheist, with a burning zeal for science and socialism. At fourteen he ceased to go with the family to church, and he did not shrink from acts of sacrilege. Once in the presence of school friends he tore down from the wall of his room and tossed out of the window the holy icons before which he had once prayed.

At eighteen he emerged from his spiritual crisis and returned to Christianity. His father's tact, the study of Spinoza, and a near escape from death played a big part in his 'conversion'. In 1872, at Moscow University, he changed from natural science to philosophy, and the following year he graduated with the best degree of his year. He also took the unprecedented step of attending lectures at the Moscow Theological Academy, which, in the eyes of the intelligentsia, was a sort of 'intellectual ghetto'. He was already dimly conscious of an intellectual apostolate: he felt that the object of his life was to provide a rational foundation for the Christian faith, to reconcile philosophy, science and religion, and to resolve the great contradictions of his age in a majestic synthesis. He was engrossed in the study of Western philosophy, the Eastern Fathers, Gnosticism, the Western and Eastern mystics. He was also profoundly fascinated by spiritualism, occultism and esoteric wisdom.

In 1874, his university thesis, *The Crisis of Western Philosophy*, a sensational critique of the disintegrating influence of idealism, empiricism and positivism, earned the brilliant young student considerable fame. He was widely acclaimed as prophet and philosopher, as 'a new Russian genius'. This success brought him a University lectureship and an invitation to teach philosophy at the newly founded Women's Institute.

In 1875 he was granted a travelling studentship to study 'gnostic, Indian and mediaeval philosophy'. Here he made Anglican contacts and discussed the possibilities of a *rapprochement* between the Church of England and the Russian Church. In the British Museum he read almost exclusively the esoteric occult literature on Sophia. He hints that his 'Eternal Friend' guided him to the books that spoke of her, and caused such difficulties when he felt the itch to procure profane works that he would return to his lodgings abashed. In the Reading Room in autumn, he had his second vision of Sophia, but beheld only her countenance. He was bidden to go to Egypt where he would receive a fuller revelation. He immediately gave up his research and proceeded via France and Italy to Egypt. A voice called him as he lay in the bedroom of his Cairo hotel: 'I am in the desert. Come there for me!' This expedition in November 1875 almost cost him his life; for some Bedouins, aghast at the remarkable appearance of this lone figure striding along in long black cloak and silk top-hat, took him for the Devil. They took his watch and ruined his coat, but let him go unharmed. He had to spend the night lying on the bare sand, and at dawn he had his last promised vision of Sophia, in which he glimpsed the transfigured and glorified universe in all its primordial splendour and unity:

All that was, and is, and shall be
My steadfast gaze embraced it all in one.
The seas and rivers sparkle blue beneath me,
And distant woods, and mountains clad in snow.
I saw it all, and all was one fair image
Of woman's beauty, holding all as one,
The boundless was within its form enclosed—
Before me and in me is you alone.

He stayed in Cairo till the expiry of his travelling studentship, and in the autumn of 1876 he returned to Russia via Italy and France. He encountered stiffer opposition to his teaching on his

return, especially among the sceptical, positivist Westernizers. In 1877 he resigned his lectureship and moved to St. Petersburg, where he obtained a minor post in the Ministry of Education. About this time he drew closer to Dostoevsky, Ivan Aksakov and the Slavophils. His outlook during the 'seventies was mainly gnostic, theosophical, Slavophil and Orthodox, anti-Western and anti-Catholic. He devoted the years 1877-80 to the formulation of his philosophical position: *The Philosophical Principles of Integral Knowledge* (1877), *The Lectures on Godmanhood* (1878)—his doctoral dissertation, *The Critique of Abstract Principles* (1880). Yet, despite his remarkable success as lecturer and philosopher, no offer of a university chair was speedily forthcoming owing to a latent jealousy and hostility in influential academic circles.

A climax in Solovyov's life and thought occurred shortly after the assassination in 1881 of Alexander II by revolutionary extremists. In a public lecture, Solovyov condemned all revolutionary violence in principle; but he also made a dramatic appeal to Tsar Alexander III to forgive his father's assassins and, by this spiritual act, to regenerate Russia and the world. This sensational action produced a violent disturbance, not only in the lecture room, but also in Russia at large, especially in conservative and official circles. Solovyov was severely reprimanded and forbidden to address public audiences for an indefinite period. He was to be henceforward a prophet without a pulpit, obstructed by the censorship and under close police surveillance. In the circumstances, Solovyov felt obliged to resign his lectureship and his post at the Ministry of Education. His resignation marks the end of his theosophical period and the beginning of his theocratic period.

The 'eighties were his most creative years, and he devoted them to Church problems, particularly Christian reunion and the reconciliation of Jews and Christians. He gradually drew away from slavophilism and, especially, from jingoistic panslavism.¹ On the other hand, he came nearer to the Westernizers; he became friendly with Fyodorov, Leontiev, Fet and Tolstoy; he also made some Jewish friends. He diligently studied Judaism and Church history. Among the more important writings of the early 'eighties are *The Three Discourses in Memory of Dostoevsky* (1881-83), *The Spiritual Foundations of Life* (1882-84), and *The Jews and the Christian Question* (1884).

By 1883 Solovyov was feeling deeply attracted to Catholicism;

¹ *The National Question in Russia*, 1883-91.

he knew the pro-Catholic circle around Princess Volkonsky; he read Dante. After 1884 he made his first contact with Roman Catholics, notably with the warm-hearted Bishop Strossmayer of Bosnia and Sirmium, well known as an 'Inopportunist' at the Vatican Council and as a doughty champion of the Slavs and the Oriental rite. In 1886, despite official obstruction in Russia, Solovyov managed to pay a very happy visit to the bishop in Diakovo (near Zagreb), where the two idealists enthusiastically discussed Christian reunion along the lines indicated by Strossmayer in a missive of 1885:

God evidently wishes that the Slavs and the Eastern Church, in brotherly union with the Western Church, may be the salvation of Europe and the regeneration of Asia. This glorious honour falls to the excellent, most religious and generous nation of Russian Slavs, that is, to your most august and Christian Emperor, who, by becoming the initiator and author of the reconciliation between the two separated Churches, will be the true defender and advocate of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Church on earth.

The bishop was generous, sympathetic and tactful. He was greatly impressed by Solovyov, recommended him to the Papal Nuncio in Vienna and to the Holy See and may also have arranged a private audience between Leo XIII and Solovyov. Meanwhile, hampered by censorship difficulties in Russia, Solovyov developed his new pro-Catholic ideas in a work published in Zagreb: *The History and Future of Theocracy*. He had also got in touch with certain French Jesuits, Frs. Gagarin, Martynov and Pierling. The last-named requested him to expound his views briefly in a French memoir. This eventually developed into the book, *La Russie et l'Eglise universelle*, published by Solovyov during his stay in Paris in 1889. The first two parts of this work alienated the Orthodox, while the last part containing Solovyov's heterodox Sophianic doctrine not unnaturally perturbed Solovyov's Catholic friends.

On his way back to Russia, Solovyov visited Bishop Strossmayer for the second and last time. They kept in touch by correspondence and remained very attached to each other. However, their idealistic hopes remained unfulfilled. Neither side was ready for this spiritual reunion—'chemical rather than mechanical'. No doubt Alexander III would have thought Solovyov 'mad' and placed him under medical supervision (as Nicholas I had treated Chaadyev); while Leo XIII is reported to have said: '*Bella idea,*

ma fuor d'un miraculo è cosa impossibile'. Thus, Solovyov's two visits to Europe left him profoundly disappointed and dejected, with a sense of failure and wasted effort. Altogether, he returned home more Russian, perhaps 'more Orthodox' (as he himself said), than when he left. However, his situation in Russia was now tragic. His break with the Slavophils and Panslavs, though at first 'correct' and restrained, became more bitter and envenomed. His enemies called him a papist and a traitor. He suffered deeply from all this abuse and calumny. His former utopian optimism began to recede before a more sombre mood.

During the 'nineties Solovyov underwent a profound spiritual crisis. He drew closer to the St. Petersburg Westernizers—the 'sceptics of the Neva' as he called them. He came to accept their liberal, social and humanitarian views as unwittingly yet profoundly Christian. He wrote for their journals and was put in charge of the philosophical section of the Brockhaus-Efron Russian encyclopaedia. He returned to philosophy (*Meaning of Love*, 1892–94, and *The Justification of the Good*, 1897), aesthetics (*Beauty in Nature*, 1889, and *General Meaning of Art*, 1890), and literary criticism. His Christianity was becoming less authoritarian and institutional—a 'religion of the Holy Spirit'. He was losing faith in Russia's messianic mission, in a universal theocracy, in Godmanship and the glorious Kingdom of God on earth. The apathetic inertia of the Russian Government and society in face of the terrible famine of 1891 was a great blow to him. He was also obsessed by the Yellow Peril or 'Panmongolism', and he hailed Kaiser Wilhelm II as the new Siegfried destined to save Christendom.

A growing sense of evil, sin and the powers of darkness was coming over Solovyov. In 1898 he revisited Egypt, and on his return he wrote his poem, *The Three Meetings*, describing his mystical encounters with Sophia. It is said that on the outward journey he entered his cabin and found a devil in the form of a shaggy beast squatting on his pillow. Solovyov is supposed to have tried to exorcize the devil by crying: 'Haven't you heard that Christ is risen?'; to which the devil retorted: 'Christ may have risen for all I know, but you will be my prey!' In the morning Solovyov was found lying unconscious on the floor. All these evil shadows induced in Solovyov an apocalyptic terror, an obscure foreboding of the coming reign of Antichrist, the end of the world and the Second Coming. This eschatological mood is reflected in Solovyov's last

work and masterpiece: *Three Conversations and the Story of Antichrist* (1889–90).

It is true that there was some relaxation of the restrictions and social ostracism towards the end of Solovyov's life, and though few shared his philosophy, his sincerity at least was respected. He was elected a member of various learned societies. He was offered a chair at Warsaw University. However, it was all too late. He was run-down and generally exhausted from intense overwork, and a tortured conscience. In 1900, at the age of forty-seven, he died after a short illness at Uzkoe near Moscow, the estate of his friends the Trubetzkys. Thus, by an ironical coincidence, the prophet of the God-Man passed away in the same year as Friedrich Nietzsche, the champion of the Man-God or Superman. On his deathbed he kept repeating that history had reached 'the End' and asked with what moral equipment the West would meet the onslaught of the East: 'No Christianity, no more ideas than at the time of the Trojan war. Only then there were young heroes, whereas now there are only old men.' He prayed aloud, particularly for the Jewish people. His last words were: 'Hard is the work of the Lord.'

The funeral service took place in the chapel of Moscow University, where he had experienced his first vision of Sophia. On his grave an unknown hand placed two icons—a Greek icon of the Resurrection and a Catholic icon of Our Lady of Ostrobram, with the inscription: *In memoria aeterna erit justus.*

III

A very vexed issue is in what sense Solovyov can be called a member of the Catholic Church. During the 'eighties, his theocratic period, Solovyov rejected the Slavophil view of the Roman Church as Antichrist and became a warm apologist of the Roman claims. He accepted the Catholic dogmas of the *filioque*, the Immaculate Conception and papal infallibility. However, he did not at that time become a Catholic because he felt that individual conversions might harm the general cause of the reunion of the Churches, and he even went so far as to declare that he set the salvation of Russia above his own personal salvation—'*Optabam enim ego ipse anathema esse a Christo pro fratribus meis.*' He appears not to have been very happy about Princess Volkonsky's conversion in 1887. While recognizing and proclaiming Rome as the centre of

Christianity, he always felt himself to belong formally to the Orthodox Eastern Church. Certainly he thought brotherly union with Rome should not involve Latinization, and Solovyov drew a sharp distinction between the Roman Primate and the Patriarch of the Western Latin Church. He claimed that the Orthodox Church possesses the Christian truth; that it has never severed itself from Rome by an official, juridically binding decree, just as it has never been condemned as a whole by Rome itself; and that consequently he could not repudiate the religion of his forbears. It is in this sense that he drew up his famous profession of faith appended to the introduction of *Russia and the Universal Church* (1889):

As a member of the true and venerable Orthodox-Eastern and Greco-Russian Church, speaking not through an uncanonical Synod or officials of the secular Government, but through the voice of its great Fathers and Teachers, I acknowledge as supreme judge in matters of religion him who has been recognized as such by St. Irenaeus, St. Dionysius the Great, St. Athanasius the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril, St. Flavian, the blessed Theodore, St. Maxim the Confessor, St. Ignatius, and others—namely the apostle Peter living in his successors to whom not in vain Our Lord said: ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. Strengthen thy brethren. Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.’

However, as the dark apocalyptic presentiments swept over him in the 'nineties, Solovyov lost faith in the practical possibility of Christian reunion. His aim was no longer the establishment of a visible, universal theocracy, but individual 'righteousness'. *The Story of Antichrist* shows how Christian reunion takes place not on an official level, but among the remnant of the Christian faithful of all denominations and only at the very end of history. Solovyov's religion became more individualistic, mystical, supra-confessional. He took refuge in an invisible 'Orthodox-Catholic Church' whose mystical unity had, he felt, never been impaired by the sinful schisms of the historical, earthly Churches.

The mystery is that during precisely this period (and not, as might have been expected, during his theocratic period in the 'eighties), Solovyov made a form of reconciliation with the Roman Church. In 1896, in Moscow, in the presence of a Catholic priest, Fr. N. Tolstoy, Solovyov, without making a formal abjuration of error, read out the Catholic Creed, handed in a written profession of faith identical to that in *Russia and the Universal Church*, and

received communion for the first and probably last time at a Catholic altar. The mystery deepens when, only a year later, in 1897, he went to confession to an Orthodox priest, Fr. Ivantsov-Platonov, but was refused absolution and communion on the presumable grounds that the penitent declined to admit that he had cut himself off from the Orthodox Church by his action in 1896. Finally, on his death-bed in 1900, Solovyov again confessed to an Orthodox priest, Fr. Belyaev, and received the Last Sacraments.

This episode has been the subject of much hypothetical speculation. Some Orthodox biographers claim that Solovyov thus returned finally to the bosom of the mother Church; while Catholic biographers repudiate this by pointing out that like all Eastern Catholics Solovyov was perfectly entitled *in extremis* to have recourse to an Orthodox (i.e. validly ordained) priest in the absence of a Catholic priest. However, the Orthodox counter this by quoting the dying words of Fr. Belyaev. Professor Frank, for instance, relates:

According to Belyaev, Solovyov said to him that he had not been to confession for some three years, since at his last confession he had an argument with the priest on a question of dogma (he did not say which) and was not admitted by him to holy communion. '*The priest was right*', he added, 'and I argued with him solely out of pride and a wish to carry my point; afterwards we exchanged some letters on the subject, but I would not give in, though I knew very well that I was wrong. *Now I am quite aware of my error and sincerely repent of it.*' (P. 249.)

D'Herbigny, on the other hand, quotes only the first half of Belyaev's statement: 'Solovyov told me that, some years previously, his last Orthodox confessor had refused him absolution for a point of dogma, but he did not tell me what it was.'¹ He comments on this statement: 'There is no need to discuss this statement; it only shows that Solovyov, though he renounced his sins, retracted none of his theological conclusions'.² Muckermann also declares 'quite positively' that 'the dying man in no wise retracted anything which he had once publicly and solemnly professed'.³ It is no doubt true that special concessions must have been accorded by Rome to converts in a country where at this period it was a criminal offence for a member of the national Church to become a Catholic. Consequently it might be said

¹ V. Soloviev, *un Newman russe*, p. 254.

² *Wladimir Solowiew*, p. 195.

³ Ibid.

that repentance for an unnamed belief may have involved an element of 'mental reservation' and cannot constitute a formal retraction. One shrinks from such an explanation; but how else reconcile these two contradictory positions save in some such casuistical terms?

Perhaps the most plausible explanation, however, is that of Berdyaev:

Solovyov wanted to be both a Roman Catholic and an Orthodox at the same time. He wanted to belong to the Oecumenical Church in which there would be fullness of a sort which does not yet exist either in Roman Catholicism or in Orthodoxy taken in their isolation and self-assertion. He allowed the possibility of inter-communion. This means that Solovyov was a supra-confessionalist; he believed in the possibility of a new era in the history of Christianity.¹

This hypothesis receives some support from Solovyov's own statement in 1892:

I am as far from the narrowness of Rome as from that of Byzantium, or of Augsburg, or of Geneva; the religion of the Holy Spirit which I profess is wider than all the particular religions.

From both the Catholic and the Orthodox standpoint, Solovyov's general religious position seems, canonically, artificial, strained and irregular. If Solovyov believed himself a member of this mystical 'Oecumenical Church' superior to both the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, he may well have set himself formally beyond the pale of both Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Did he become a sort of 'religious free-thinker' prepared to ignore the actual requirements of the churches and thus go much further than other spiritually displaced persons like Péguy or Simone Weil? No doubt Solovyov's religious affiliation will always remain a mystery. But if Berdyaev is right, it is hard to see how Solovyov died an Orthodox or a Catholic at all. As for the Orthodox case, what credence can be placed in a testimony which itself constitutes a breach of the absolute secrecy of the Confessional? And in regard to the Catholic account, it must surely be admitted that more conclusive evidence needs to be made public than has hitherto seemed sufficient?

¹ *The Russian Idea*, p. 178.

IV

All Solovyov's acquaintances have dwelt upon his arresting appearance, and his portraits, too, have captured something of his mysterious personal magic. He was tall and spare. His face, with its lofty brow, regular features and sensitive mouth, was pale, thin, austere, almost emaciated, enclosed by the long locks of slightly curling hair which fell upon his shoulders. But the most striking feature in the face was the melancholy, penetrating, grey-blue eyes peering from beneath jet-black brows. 'Such faces,' writes de Vogué, who met him in Cairo, 'must have inspired the monastic painters of the past who sought a model for the Christ of their icons. It was the face of Christ as seen by the Slav people.' It is the face of a dreamer, visionary or prophet—noble, idealistic, full of latent, subdued fire.

The legend is that Dostoevsky had Solovyov in mind when he drew the character of Alyosha Karamazov, the meek, Christlike heir of Fr. Zosima's testament and the symbol of a new Russian spirituality. Certainly there is a large element of truth in this. Solovyov's Christian goodness, charity and asceticism were remarkable. Wherever he stayed he was always accessible to friends, admirers and petitioners who made heavy demands upon his time and energy. He was constantly besieged by beggars to whom he gave whatever he had on him—his purse, his handkerchief, his galoshes. He even gave away his overcoat to a poor student one winter without having the money to buy another for himself. One year of food scarcity he decided to have dinners only every other day, so as to enable a poor man to do the same. Frauds he treated as generously as the genuine, for he felt that they needed even more help than the rest. Towards all failures and the morally fallen in their humiliation he was particularly gentle. He was most at his ease with children and animals. He had no servant, not even a home of his own; he was ever restlessly on the move from hotel to hotel or putting up with friends; he brought love, light and warmth wherever he was invited; he lived on vegetables and tea, often neglected his meals and seldom slept on a bed. Rozanov called him an 'unconsecrated priest', and it is true that strangers often took him for a priest. Masaryk styled him a 'secular monk and ascetic', while Bishop Strossmayer described him as '*anima candida pia ac vera sancta*'. Many of his friends were alarmed at his

innocence and improvidence and practical helplessness; but their remonstrances were of no avail. Right till the end he remained a 'fool for Christ's sake' in the true Russian tradition.

The basis of his life and activity was his rare mystical experience. His whole philosophy was a logical systematization of his Sophianic visions. Hence, as Professor Frank observes, 'the duality between the rationalistic form and the mystical content'. Yet the fact remains that Solovyov was very reticent about his mystical life. Only just before his death did he make any revelations, and then only in the form of a mock-serious poem (*Three Meetings*). In any case, his mysticism was not just oriental and passive, but conducive to action in the world. He was not a world-fleeing contemplative, but a social and religious reformer, the prophet of the New Heaven and the New Earth. In this active task he worked restlessly and unceasingly, without fear or compromise, not sparing himself nor caring for his own well-being or personal interests, zealous only for what he deemed to be the truth.

Merezhkovsky has called him a 'Russian John the Baptist'. Russian he was, indeed, through and through. Indifferent to Western culture and ways, he felt more Russian in Europe than ever before. He was also a prophet and ascetic, belonging to society yet not of it, essentially other-worldly. Yet there was constantly a fruitful 'withdrawal and return'. In society his shy, attractive manners, his deep sonorous voice, his originality of thought and his skilled, ardent advocacy radiated a magic appeal. His eloquence earned him the title of 'the Russian Carlyle' in Anglican circles. As a scholar, he possessed an encyclopaedic learning in philosophy, science and history. He was also an excellent linguist. Yet he remained no recluse or pedant, but modest, affable and courteous. In controversy he was calm and restrained, confident, ready to concede partial truths, rarely one-sided, bitter or partisan. His very goodness won over his opponents and earned their esteem. How else explain his remarkable influence over the positivist university youth of the 'seventies? Admittedly, his brilliant rapier-work in controversy makes one sometimes a little sorry for the savage blunderings of Aksakov and the Slavophils, as in the very similar case of Newman and Kingsley.

The characteristic temper of Solovyov's mind is idealist, optimistic, utopian. The outward, visible world is shadowy and unreal. 'I do not believe in the deceptive world,' he said. 'I recognize the radiance of the Godhead beneath the coarse crust of matter.' Or

again: 'Not only do I believe in everything supernatural, but, strictly speaking, I believe in nothing else.' He even went so far as to declare that there is no difference between faith in the existence of God and faith in the reality of the external world. Through all Solovyov's outlook runs this unfortunate, philosophically untenable confusion between reason and revelation, between the natural and the supernatural, between man and God, between earth and heaven. On the other hand, such fundamental Christian conceptions as the Fall, the Cross, Sin and Evil, Hell and Judgement, are curiously distorted or minimized by Solovyov. 'I do not believe in the devil,' he once wrote.

For most of his life, he was an impenitent optimistic radical, turning successively to science and revolutionary socialism, to theosophy, to Slavophilism and to Catholicism in order to justify his mad, utopian endeavour to invert the Tower of Babel and to drag down heaven on earth. Reckless of human limitations, Solovyov was in too great a hurry to fling up out of corruptible human material an emergency City of God. However, his glowing vision of the deified, transfigured cosmos was not only his ideal but his cross. For contact with the finite world and fallen humanity was to lead by way of inevitable reaction to the equally exaggerated pessimism and despair of his last years. With an almost Manichaeian distrust of the material order he came to reject all outward, organized, authoritarian religion. 'I am supposed to be a Catholic', he told Lopatin, 'but as a matter of fact I am more of a Protestant.' He also wrote to the poet Velichko in 1895: 'You and I have not been observing the rules about fasting or going to church: there was nothing bad in it, for all this is not meant for us.'

Here we enter the heart of the Solovyov enigma. The face of Alyosha dissolves into that of Ivan Karamazov, the brilliant free-thinker and dialectician. Berdyaev rightly distinguishes between the 'Solovyov of the day' and the 'Solovyov of the night'. Certainly Solovyov's public personality is subtly deceptive, and like the equally enigmatic Gogol he seems to conceal rather than to reveal himself in his work. Mochulsky also has admirably illuminated this odd *dédoubllement* within Solovyov's personality—the radiant Alyosha and his dark 'double'. Hence the ambivalence of response to Solovyov's character by his contemporaries. Rozanov said: 'Solovyov was brilliant, cold, steely', and he sensed in him a strange, frightening inhumanity. Leontiev raved on his death-bed

that Solovyov was a servant of Satan and Antichrist. Solovyov himself wrote to Countess Tolstoy: '*Avec une apparence de bonté j'ai un cœur très méchant*', and he introduces some very mysterious overtones into his own portrait of Antichrist.

He was usually very serious; but there are many accounts of his unexpected bursts of weird, unnatural laughter; he could pass abruptly from sheer nonsense to ironical cynicism and irreverence. On the other hand, he was prone to frightening fits of silence and melancholia. Bishop Strossmayer speaks of Solovyov's 'natural tendency to melancholy, one might almost say to despair'. Finally, there is the dark, turbid romanticism bound up with Solovyov's Sophianic cult. The Sophia had its erotic aspect as the Eternal-Feminine:

Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan.

Mochulsky very plausibly links the first vision of 1862 with Solovyov's unrequited love for his nine-year-old cousin, Juliette Solovyov, and the second and third visions of 1875 with his likewise unrequited love for a woman student, E. M. Polivanovna. There were many 'loves' in Solovyov's life—the idealistic, intellectual affair with Katya Romanova, the long, tragic devotion to the 'Madonna of the Steppes', Mme Sophia Hitrovo, and the stormy, sensual, humiliating passion for Mme Sophia Martynova. Then, at the very end, emerged Mme Anna Schmidt, the plain, middle-aged, provincial schoolmistress and journalistic hack, a sort of Russian Mme Guyon, with an exalted mystical temperament, who believed herself to be the incarnation of Sophia, and Solovyov himself the embodiment of the Heavenly Bridegroom. Is it too fanciful to see in Solovyov's recoil from this exteriorization of the Heavenly Aphrodite in Mme Schmidt something analogous to Ivan Karamazov's horror at the incarnation of his ideas in the posturing Smerdyakov?

The more one probes behind Solovyov's surface simplicity, behind the reticences and evasions, the more complicated, deep and mysterious he becomes.

DOCTRINAL TO AN AGE

NOTES TOWARDS A REVALUATION OF POPE'S *ESSAY ON MAN*

By J. M. CAMERON

They support Pope, I see, in the *Quarterly*. Let them continue to do so: it is a Sin and a Shame, and a *damnation* to think that *Pope!* ! should require it—but he does. Those miserable mountebanks of the day, the poets, disgrace themselves and deny God, in running down Pope, the most *faultless* of Poets, and almost of men.

BYRON.

THE *Essay on Man* is a poem doctrinal to an age and a society if not to a nation. It is perhaps the most interesting example in English of a philosophical poem; and as such it has to be considered in any discussion of the relation between poetic form and intellectual content. Are we to discuss it as we should an unornamented philosophical essay, as we should discuss, say, Locke's *Essay* or Berkeley's *Principles*? It would plainly be ridiculous so to discuss Lucretius. The *De Rerum Natura* is a deeply moving poem for those who altogether reject its philosophy and find the argument abstracted from the poem shoddy. Are we to place it rather with *Paradise Lost* and with *The Prelude*, as a work of the imagination which touches on philosophical themes but of which it would not be sensible to demand that it should exhibit logical consistency in a high degree? There is a respectable critical tradition against so placing this or any other of Pope's works. Arnold is the most distinguished representative of this tradition,¹ but it would not be an exaggeration to say that, at least until fairly recently, most English critics later than the Augustan age would have said that to apply the word poetry simultaneously to the work of Pope, and to the work of Shakespeare or Milton or Wordsworth, was almost to equivocate. Agreement with such an assertion would seem to throw us back upon the view that the *Essay* must be judged as

¹ See Geoffrey Tillotson, 'Matthew Arnold and Eighteenth-century Poetry', in *Essays on the Eighteenth Century*. Presented to David Nichol Smith, 1945.

rhymed philosophy. Judged in this way, it is not a remarkable piece of philosophy. And yet, after an attentive reading of the *Essay*, it is hard to say without hesitations and involuntary backward glances that the experience has been simply that of reading a poor philosophical essay embellished with rhymes and other ornaments. It is also true that the experience does not seem much to resemble the reading of *Paradise Lost* or of *The Prelude*. It is possible to argue that every poem is such that it differs in kind from every other poem and that it would therefore be unreasonable to approach *An Essay on Man* with expectations prompted by some other poem; but even if we agree that in some sense every poem is *sui generis*, it remains true that some have urged that the word poem cannot be used of the *Essay* except in the most trivial of its meanings. The publication of Mr. Maynard Mack's new edition of *An Essay on Man* in the Twickenham Edition¹ seems to offer an occasion for a reconsideration of the poem and of some of the critical issues thereby revealed.

If we examine Pope's own expressed intentions we find that he saw the *Essay* as 'forming a *temperate* yet not *inconsistent*, and a *short* yet not *imperfect* system of Ethics'. He continues: 'This I might have done in prose; but I chose verse, and even rhyme, for two reasons. The one will appear obvious; that principles, maxims, or precepts so written, both strike the reader more strongly at first, and are more easily retained by him afterwards: The other may seem odd, but is true, I found I could express them more *shortly* this way than in prose itself; and nothing is more certain, than that much of the *force* as well as *grace* of arguments or instructions, depends on their conciseness.'²

This would seem to suggest that his principal intention was to exhibit a system of ethics and that its being cast in poetic form was a matter of convenience, much as we more readily remember the lengths of the months by reciting to ourselves, 'Thirty days hath September. . . .' That this was what Pope thought himself to be doing does not tell us that this was what he did. Only from an examination of the poem itself can we decide upon this question. There is evidence that his attitude to the poem was somewhat less decided and more ambiguous than the words quoted above would suggest. When, partly through the influence of the Swiss philosopher

¹ Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, edited by Maynard Mack, The Twickenham Edition, Vol. III, i. Methuen, 30s. This is hereafter referred to as Mack.

² 'The Design', Mack, pp. 7, 8.

Crousaz, the *Essay* began to acquire an evil reputation among the orthodox, Warburton strove to vindicate the orthodoxy of Pope's doctrine in a series of articles in *The Republick of Letters*. Pope was immensely gratified, and wrote that 'you have made my system as clear as I ought to have done, and could not. It is indeed the same system as mine, but illustrated with a ray of your own, as they say our natural body is the same still when it is glorified. I am sure I like it better than I did before . . . I know I meant just what you explain; but I did not explain my own meaning so well as you. You understand me as well as I do myself; but you express me better than I could express myself'.¹ Even if we allow for an excess of politeness, these admissions surely reveal a radical uncertainty over what exactly he was driving at in the *Essay*.

Pope's method of composing the *Essay*, so far as we can establish it,² supports the view that we are concerned with philosophy versified. He seems often to have prepared prose statements of arguments later to be turned into verse; and even though there is no longer any very good reason to take seriously the legend that in writing the *Essay* Pope simply cast into verse a prose argument supplied by Bolingbroke, it may be that the argument of the greater part of the *Essay* was first set down in prose. This does not mean that the structure of the *Essay* or of any one Epistle is a prose structure the sequence of which is determined by the development of a continuous argument. The units of which the poem is composed are, as Mr. Sherburn has shown, verse paragraphs, and it is arguable that the order of these paragraphs is up to a point arbitrary.³ This Johnson perceived. 'Almost every poem, consisting of precepts, is so far arbitrary and unmethodical, that many of the paragraphs may change places with no apparent inconvenience; for of two or more positions, depending upon some remote and general principle, there is seldom any cogent reason why one should precede the other.'⁴ Johnson appears to have thought that this was compatible with a sort of philosophical consistency, and so it may be; but the relevant comparison is with the philosophers

¹ Cited in Samuel Johnson, 'Life of Pope', in *Lives of the Poets* (World's Classics, 1906, Vol. II, pp. 289, 290).

² See George Sherburn, 'Pope at Work', in *Essays on the Eighteenth Century*.

³ 'One may well suspect that in later days the *Essay on Man* would have been more favourably regarded by critics if the poet had printed his verse paragraphs frankly as such—if, in the manner of Traherne's *Centuries of Meditations* or of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, he had been content to leave his verse units as fragmentary reflections on philosophic ideas that are bound to have recurrent interest.' *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁴ Johnson, op. cit., p. 243.

of Pope's own day, and it is hard to think of any contemporary work of the first rank of which this would hold good—though it might well be thought to hold good of the work of Shaftesbury or Bolingbroke. In any case, Johnson, in rejecting as improbable the story that Pope had put into verse a systematic argument constructed by Bolingbroke, did so on the ground that 'the *Essay* plainly appears the fabrick of a poet: what Bolingbroke supplied could be only the first principles; the order, illustrations, and embellishments must all be Pope's'.¹

It would scarcely be worth while showing that, as philosophy, the *Essay* is an unimpressive performance, unless one had some further purpose in view.² But the inadequacies of the poem considered from this standpoint may bring out, by pointing to what Pope has certainly *not* achieved, those characteristics of the poem which may support a claim to another kind of achievement. Two illustrations of what can be taken as incoherences of argument may be offered.

Epistle I is concerned to show that man is necessarily ignorant in two respects. In the first place, the cosmos in its vastness and complexity escapes for the most part man's scrutiny because man's senses and intellectual powers are insufficient for the task.

But of this frame the bearings, and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Look'd thro' ? or can a part contain the whole?
(Epistle I, ll. 29-32.)

In the second place, man is unable to understand the rationale of the cosmos considered as a scheme of things which is, both in its particular operations and as a totality, good. That such is the rationale of the cosmos Pope holds, simply by deduction from the nature of God as infinite wisdom and infinite goodness, to be certain. But how this can be is beyond the power of man to determine.

When the proud steed shall know why Man restrains
His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains;
When the dull Ox, why now he breaks the clod,
Is now a victim, and now Ægypt's God;

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

² The task of showing how bad as philosophy the *Essay* may be considered has been performed, without much sympathy and with little awareness that this is not the only relevant question, by the late Professor Laird. See John Laird, 'Pope's *Essay on Man*', in *Philosophical Incursions into English Literature*, 1946.

Then shall Man's pride and dulness comprehend
 His actions', passions', being's, use and end;
 Why doing, suff'ring, check'd, impell'd; and why
 This hour a slave, the next a deity.

(Epistle I, ll. 61-68.)

Now, the rest of the poem is simply inconsistent with this contention that man's ignorance is such that he is incapable of knowing the complex harmonies of the cosmos and of finding a justification of those detailed cosmic arrangements which seem inconsistent with the postulated Divine goodness. In the remaining three Epistles we are offered a variety of arguments designed to show precisely *how* the constitution of human nature and the situation of man vis-à-vis the forces of nature and the brutes are arranged with a view to the good of the individual and the whole.

Such appears to be one inconsistency of the poem taken as a whole. A failure of detail may be illustrated. In Epistle III Pope employs the conception, derived from Aristotle and brought home forcibly to the educated public of Pope's day by Locke, that the best form of state is that possessing a 'mixed constitution'. This fits in admirably with the Heraclitean thesis, advanced by Pope in several connexions, that order springs from a tension of opposing forces.¹

. . . jarring int'rests of themselves create
 Th'according music of a well-mix'd State.

(Epistle III, ll. 293, 294.)

But within a few lines he can follow this with :

For Forms of Government let fools contest;
 Whate'er is best administer'd is best. . .

(Epistle III, ll. 303, 304.)

If, then, we expect of the poem a system of ethics and a cosmic scheme notable for their internal coherence and capable of being

¹ Cf. Passions, like Elements, tho' born to fight,
 Yet, mix'd and soften'd, in his work unite:
 These 'tis enough to temper and employ;
 But what composes Man, can Man destroy?
 Suffice that Reason keep to Nature's road,
 Subject, compound them, follow her and God.
 Love, Hope, and Joy, fair pleasure's smiling train,
 Hate, Fear, and Grief, the family of pain;
 These mix'd with art, and to due bounds confin'd,
 Make and maintain the balance of the mind:
 The lights and shades, whose well accorded strife
 Gives all the strength and colour of our life.

(Epistle II, ll. 111-122.)

derived from plausible first principles, we are likely to be disappointed. One has, all the same, to remember that, judged by such tests, there are few philosophical works—perhaps none—that would be thought by all philosophers to be of merit. Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* is without doubt a philosophical classic; but the first six chapters do not appear to be coherent with or even relevant to the rest of the argument, which seems to be governed, not by the mechanistic anthropology of the first chapters, but by a quite different anthropology derived from introspection, historical learning, and acquaintance with men and affairs. It is curious, and not altogether irrelevant to our discussion of Pope's *Essay*, that Professor Oakeshott has attempted to account for the distinction of Hobbes's work in terms that in my judgement amount to a defence of the *Leviathan* as an organic whole analogous to a great poem, and not as primarily a work of ratiocination.¹ Again, no philosophical work has in modern times had a wider and deeper influence than the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* of Wittgenstein; and yet its author has been so obliging as to indicate in the closing pages its necessary—as he thinks—incoherence.² I do not myself find Pope's argument at all points quite so ludicrously bad as Professor Laird found it.³ If we are to have an argument for 'cosmic Toryism', Pope's is a great deal better than that of Soame Jenyns, who argues that 'our difficulties [with regard to the existence of misery in the universe] arise from our wrong notions of Omnipotence, and forgetting how many difficulties it has to contend with . . . it is obliged either to afflict Innocence, or be the cause of Wickedness; it has plainly no other Option: what then could infinite Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness do in this situation more consistent with itself, than to call into being Creatures formed with such depravity, in their dispositions, as to induce many of them to act in such a

¹ Cf. 'The coherence of [Hobbes's] philosophy, the system of it, lies not in an architectonic structure, but in a single "passionate thought" that pervades its parts. The system is not the plan or key of the labyrinth of the philosophy; it is, rather, a guiding clue, like the thread of Ariadne. It is like the music that gives meaning to the movement of dancers, or the law of evidence that gives coherence to the practice of a court. And the thread, the hidden thought, is the continuous application of a doctrine about the nature of philosophy. Hobbes's philosophy is the world reflected in the mirror of the philosophic eye, each image the representation of a fresh object, but each determined by the character of the mirror itself.' Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited with an Introduction by Michael Oakeshott, n.d., p. xix.

² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1922, *ad fin.* Just after I wrote these words, the news came to me of the death of Wittgenstein. Even those who think the direct consequences of his published work to have been unfortunate must salute his integrity and his genius.

³ Immanuel Kant greatly esteemed the *Essay*. Cf. Mack, p. xli.

manner as to render themselves proper subjects for such necessary sufferings. . . .¹ Nevertheless, we may agree that if we are to classify Pope as a philosopher he belongs rather with Jenyns than with Locke or Berkeley. Bolingbroke's flashy genius seems greatly to have impressed him. This does not argue philosophic acumen in Pope; but the very qualities which made him respond with such ardour to Bolingbroke, the moving, breathing, eloquent, and fetching man²—philosophy, so Pope thought, in the concrete—are qualities which provide a partial explanation of a greatness quite other than philosophical in the *Essay on Man*.

'The great poet, in writing himself, writes his time.' So Mr. Eliot in a famous essay. He continues: '. . . it was [Shakespeare's] business to express the greatest emotional intensity of his time, based on whatever his time happened to think. Poetry is not a substitute for philosophy or theology or religion . . . [its] function is not intellectual but emotional, it cannot be defined adequately in intellectual terms.'³ It would be easy wilfully to misunderstand Mr. Eliot. Has 'a time' a 'greatest emotional intensity'? Are not the greatest emotional intensities of any time precisely those which transcend the time and are human rather than peculiar to a single time and culture? Is not the 'function' of poetry too simply and too narrowly defined? These and other objections can be raised to the way in which Mr. Eliot has formulated his thought. If we go behind the formulation we find it suggested (or so I think) that there is an important sense in which, to take examples, Arnold's *Dover Beach* rather than *Locksley Hall*, Mr. Eliot's *The Family Reunion* rather than *The Lady's Not for Burning*, express with some degree of success an 'emotional intensity' of their periods. Their importance, the extent to which they do perform their poetic function, lies in an ordering of feeling to expression and of expression to feeling, an ordering which is such that feeling and expression

¹ Soame Jenyns, 'A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil', in *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose and Verse*, Third Edition, 1770, pp. 306, 307.

² Cf. Come then, my Friend, my Genius, come along,

 Oh master of the poet, and the song!
 And while the Muse now stoops, or now ascends,
 To Man's low passions, or their glorious ends,
 Teach me, like thee, in various nature wise,
 To fall with dignity, with temper rise;
 Form'd by thy converse, happily to steer
 From grave to gay, from lively to severe;
 Correct with spirit, eloquent with ease,
 Intent to reason, or polite to please. (*Epistle IV*, ll. 373-382.)

³ T. S. Eliot, 'Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca', in *Elizabethan Essays*, 1934, p. 50.

make up an organic rather than a casual and contrived unity. The quality and depth of the reverberation provoked by a reading of them carry with them a suggestion of authenticity that scarcely needs a precautionary analysis of the poem itself.

Such an analysis may all the same be necessary. We know that every culture has certain limitations making it difficult or impossible for those within it to enjoy poems or pictures or buildings which were enjoyed by earlier cultures and which will be enjoyed again by those still to come. These limitations make the distinctive 'taste' of a period. The limitations were narrow enough in Pope's own day. The power and charm of the Gothic and of 'primitive' art were on the whole inaccessible to the men of the period¹—even Shakespeare we may suppose to have been less accessible than he was to the early seventeenth century or than he is to us. Where there was an expressed liking for the Gothic it was on account of its supposed fantasticality and was, so to speak, a species of fooling, resembling in this respect the liking of Mr. Betjeman and his disciples for certain examples of Victorian architecture. What we have to show, if we are to vindicate the claim that *An Essay on Man* is one of our greatest poems, is that an analysis of the poem suggests that the general failure of the nineteenth century—a failure which still overshadows us, making our response to the poetry of Pope an embarrassed one—adequately to respond to the *Essay* is simply a failure of taste, an inability to move outside the narrowness imposed upon our literary culture by the romantic movement. The making of the analysis will, if it does seem to indicate a failure of taste in us, itself be a means of modifying our taste in such a way as to liberate us from our present narrowness.²

Mr. Mack's penetrating analysis of the poem is designed to show that it has been enormously undervalued; that in it Pope does 'write his time'; and that the achievement in terms of his accomplished union of expression with feeling is great both as a formal structure and as being for us the possible occasion of a deep

¹ Cf. '... the grand distinction between Grecian and Gothic architecture, the latter being fantastical, and for the most part founded neither in nature nor in reason, in necessity nor use, the appearance of which accounts for all the beauty, grace, and ornament of the other.' George Berkeley, *Alciphron or the Minute Philosopher*, Third Dialogue, in The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne, Vol. III, edited by T. E. Jessop, 1950, p. 127. This state of affairs changes later in the century.

² Two works may be mentioned as having done much to modify our sensibility and make the poetry of Pope more accessible to us: Edith Sitwell, *Alexander Pope*, 1930; and Geoffrey Tillotson, *On the Poetry of Pope*, 1938. Mr. Wilson Knight's 'The Vital Flame: An Essay on Pope', in his *The Burning Oracle*, 1939, should also be noted, especially in connexion with the *Essay on Man*.

and rich experience. But before I comment on what Mr. Mack has to say, I should like to show from one example that it is perhaps unjust to deride the failure of the nineteenth century to respond with pleasure to Pope as being simply a failure of taste, a failure unfortified by any serious weighing of the problem.

. . . The relation between the three poems [i.e. *The Faerie Queen*, *Paradise Lost*, and *An Essay on Man*] is, indeed, characteristic. Milton and Spenser could utter their deepest thoughts about man's position in the universe and his moral nature by aid of a symbolism intelligible to themselves and their readers. But where was Pope to turn for concrete symbols sufficiently expressive of his thought? The legends of the Bible claimed too little reverence. Even in the majestic poetry of Milton we are unpleasantly reminded of the fact that the mighty expounder of Puritan thought is consciously devising a conventional imagery. The old romance which had fed Spenser's imagination was too hopelessly dead to serve the purpose. It had left behind a wearisome spawn of so-called romances; it had been turned into mere ribaldry by Butler; and Pope wisely abandoned his cherished project of an epic poem, though feebler hands attempted the task. The 'Essay on Man' is substantially a versification of the most genuine creed of the time; of that Deism which took various shapes. . . . But the thought had generated no concrete imagery. It remained of necessity what it was at first—a mere bare skeleton of logic, never clothed upon by imaginative flesh and blood. As in Clarke's sermons, we have diagrams instead of pictures; a system of axioms, deductions, and corollaries instead of a rich mythology; a barren metaphysico-mathematical theory of the universe, which might satisfy the intellect, but remained hopelessly frigid for the emotional nature.

Pope's poetry is thus forced to become didactic, and not only didactic, but ratiocinative. . . .¹

It may be that in this passage Leslie Stephen betrays a partial failure of taste, a failure which has led him to neglect some of the most striking features of the poem. It is a gross simplification of the *Essay* to describe it as a versification of Deism; this is to neglect the traditional elements that are, as we shall see, both prominent in the poem and necessary to its full effect. (We are not quite sure that Stephen may not also have in mind a curious theory of poetry not at all coherent with his main position; for shortly after the passage quoted above we find him writing: 'A consistent pantheism or a consistent scepticism may be made the sources of profoundly impressive poetry. Each of them generates a deep and

¹ Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, Second Edition, 1881, Vol. II, p. 351.

homogeneous sentiment which may utter itself in song. Pope, as the mouthpiece of Spinoza or of Hobbes, might have written an impressive poem. . . .¹⁾ All the same, his comment is a shrewd one. He sees that if the *Essay* fails it will be through the lack of a symbolism that can be used with effect. The mythological cosmos which earlier poets had used with effect has at last given way before the attack which has raged with continual fury from Copernicus to Newton. Poor Pope has thus no materials to build with: he is reduced to 'a barren metaphysico-mathematical theory of the universe'.

Now, I believe there is a perfectly serious and valid point lying behind and accounting for Stephen's comment. But as the comment stands it seems to indicate simply a failure on his part to read the poem with the minimum degree of attention necessary for the understanding of it. Who but Pope has drawn attention to the bankruptcy of Newtonian physics, not indeed as *descriptive*, but as *explanatory*?

Superior beings, when of late they saw
 A mortal Man unfold all Nature's law,
 Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
 And shew'd a NEWTON as we show an Ape.
 Could he, whose rules the rapid Comet bind,
 Describe or fix one movement of his Mind?
 Who saw its fires here rise, and there descend,
 Explain his own beginning, or his end?
 Alas what wonder! Man's superior part
 Uncheck'd may rise, and climb from art to art:
 But when his own great work is but begun,
 What Reason weaves, by Passion is undone.

(Epistle II, ll. 31-42.)

Pope here shows that 'a . . . metaphysico-mathematical theory of the universe' does not 'satisfy the intellect'; and he is quite consciously setting himself against a prevailing climate of thought.² If it should be argued that, although he may see the limitation of the Newtonian physics as an explanatory hypothesis, he has nevertheless no other cosmic imagery upon which to draw, and must, if he does so draw, present us with sterile symbols having no power

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

² Cf. Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Newton Demands the Muse*, Princeton, 1946, pp. 135, 136. Pope was by no means alone in this. See R. F. Jones, 'The Background of the Attack on Science in the Age of Pope', in *Pope and His Contemporaries. Essays presented to George Sherburn, 1949*.

to fructify in the imagination, the answer can only be an appeal to the poem itself.

Far as Creation's ample range extends,
The scale of sensual, mental pow'rs ascends :
Mark how it mounts, to Man's imperial race,
From the green myriads in the peopled grass :
What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam :
Of smell, the headlong lioness between,
And hound sagacious on the tainted green :
Of hearing, from the life that fills the flood,
To that which warbles thro' the vernal wood :
The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine !
Feels at each thread and lives along the line :
In the nice bee, what sense so subtly true
From pois'nous herbs extract the healing dew :
How Instinct varies in the grov'ling swine,
Compar'd, half-reas'ning elephant, with thine :
'Twixt that, and Reason, what a nice barrier ;
For ever sep'rate, yet for ever near !

(Epistle I, ll. 207-224.)

This is surely no 'barren metaphysico-mathematical theory of the universe'. It is in fact a far more primitive cosmological scheme than Newton's and one imaginatively realized with exquisite grace in these lines. Here Pope shows a fine sense of the connexion that must exist for poetry between the experience of living as a concrete process,

Wild Nature's vigor working at the root¹

and the conceptual schemes designed to universalize it. The notion of a 'scale of being' is here triumphantly shown to be still a valid poetic symbol.

The surface meaning of Stephen's criticism, then, is not altogether supported by an examination of the poem. But I believe there is a point Stephen is trying to make, though he makes it very badly or perhaps not at all. This point, if it can be shown to be valid, by no means disposes of the *Essay* as a poem having pretensions to greatness; but it does suggest that there is a serious failure within it, and one which has to be attributed to a certain superficiality in the theology and philosophy upon which Pope has perforce to rely.

At the beginning of Epistle I Pope summons us to

¹ Epistle II, l. 184.

Expatriate free o'er all this scene of Man;
A mighty maze! but not without a plan. . . .

(Epistle I, ll. 5, 6.)

The choice of the word 'maze' as the apt symbol of the complex of relations within which man stands is of immense importance in governing our response to the poem as a whole. A maze is a grouping of paths through which it is difficult to find one's way. But every maze is constructed on a plan which can in the end, given patience and ingenuity, be grasped. No doubt many of us, once within a maze, would be unable to find our way to the centre and thence to the point at which we entered, without the help of someone familiar with the construction of the maze. But this failure is not a radical one, springing from the insufficiency of our nature and a mysteriousness intrinsic to mazes; it denotes merely a failure on our part to observe, and to reason correctly. Again, the complexity of a maze exists, as it were, at a single level. It resembles the complexity of a game of chess or of a logical construction. It presents us with a *problem*; whereas, to employ the now familiar distinction of M. Marcel, the poetic cosmos must, if it is to draw from us an adequate response, present itself as *mysterious* rather than *problematical*. The *Essay* does not at all points fail to give us a sense of mystery; but the attitude often in control is that suggested by the word 'maze'.¹

Again, what weight in reading do we give to 'but not without a plan'? I submit that we are compelled to give it a certain lightness, almost jauntiness, indicating some complacency in our contemplation of the maze. It presents us with a teasing problem, certainly: but we are the men to solve it. Thus, although Pope specifically denies that men can do more than apprehend the most general features of the maze, the attitude created in us by the couplet disposes us not to take too seriously his professions of modesty. In his exposition in Epistle I of 'the great scale', 'Nature's chain', Pope plays with the supposition—not conceived to be a real possibility—that the cosmic order should break down in one of its parts.

¹ I do not know if it has been noticed that there may be some significance in the professions of K. in Kafka's *The Trial* and *The Castle*. In the former K. is a bank official, in the latter a surveyor. In both professions we have to do with *measurement*, the criterion of judgement is quantitative. The failure of K. in both instances springs from an inability to see that the relationship between man and the heavenly powers is not problematical but mysterious. A mystery cannot be solved: it can only be embraced in humility and love. See my 'Theological Fragments', *The Downside Review*, Spring 1949, pp. 144 ff.

And if each system in gradation roll,
 Alike essential to th'amazing whole;
 The least confusion but in one, not all
 That system only, but the whole must fall.
 Let Earth unbalanc'd from her orbit fly,
 Planets and Suns run lawless thro' the sky,
 Let ruling Angels from their spheres be hurl'd,
 Being on being wreck'd, and world on world,
 Heav'n's whole foundations to their centre nod,
 And Nature tremble to the throne of God. . . .

(Epistle I, ll. 247-256.)

There is a parallel passage in Hooker.

. . . Now if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether though it were but for a while the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should as it were through a languishing faintness begin to stand and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yield them relief: what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world?¹

If we take into account the advantages and limitations of the poetic and prose forms—the *intention* in each case seems much the same—it seems to me plain that we have to say in the end, not only that Hooker comes off in a way that Pope does not quite come off, but also that there breathes through the language and the images employed a different attitude to the possibility which is being entertained. There is in Hooker a *serious* attitude to the possibility, the same attitude that is to be found in the parallel passage on ‘degree’ in *Troilus and Cressida*,² an attitude which (we

¹ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I, Ch. iii, 2, in The Works of Mr. Richard Hooker, arranged by John Keble, Seventh Edition, revised by R. W. Church and F. Paget, 1888, Vol. I, pp. 207, 208. Hooker is here adapting a passage from Arnobius (*fl. c. A.D. 305*).

² I, iii.

may conjecture) springs from a deep feeling of being involved in the strains and conflicts of a revolutionary period. The attitude of Pope remains that of the spectator. The entities ordered within the cosmos are *systems*—the choice of the abstract word is significant; I am confident, in face of Mr. Mack's telling us that the 'ruling Angels' hurled from their spheres represent 'a belief by no means wholly displaced in the Augustan age',¹ that the 'ruling Angels' are very far advanced on the way to becoming theatrical properties. Perhaps the notion was not so idle a speculation as it would have seemed to a nineteenth-century agnostic; but there is no conceivable connexion with the Newtonian cosmos, which Pope takes perfectly seriously as a *description*, though he properly rejects it as an *explanation*; they are, in short, *ornaments*. This attitude to imagery is strictly incompatible with the seriousness of the theme. That it is Pope's conscious attitude, however much he may from time to time rise above it, cannot be doubted. He expresses in 'The Design' prefixed to the *Essay*, the hope that 'these Epistles in their progress . . . will be less dry, and more susceptible of poetical ornament'.²

Such, then, are some of the considerations which seem to make it important, for the sake of the credit of the poem itself, not to advance the highest claims for the *Essay on Man*. This granted, it remains to suggest that the unfavourable judgements which have beset the poem from its birth are at least in part misconceived.

Mr. Mack believes that past study of the *Essay* has too often placed the poem against the wrong background: that of the philosophy and natural science of the Enlightenment. We should do better to examine it 'in the light of Renaissance thought and literature. Here the ideas . . . can be studied in formulations elaborated and particularized by the literary imagination of centuries, and arranged in a pattern or formed *Weltanschauung* that seeks to take hold of the relations of God and man not through theorem but through symbol'.³ In such a light, we are able to trace the 'implicit organization [of the poem], its attitudes, images, emotions, and its developing theme';⁴ the 'implicit organization' is to be contrasted with the logical meaning and organization of the poem. The latter may be taken as expressing Pope's conscious intention, the former accounts for the impact of the poem, an impact felt in spite of the logical meaning and organization which, abstracted from the concrete *compositum* of words and all they

¹ Mack, p. 46.

² Ibid., p. 8.

³ Ibid., p. xlvi.

⁴ Ibid., p. xlvi.

produce in us, and taken too seriously, prevents our receiving the impact of the poem with the greatest effect.

It is possible to show that, seen in this way, the *Essay* has striking affinities with the theme of violated and in the end re-established order which is central in such plays of Shakespeare as *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, which is present (perhaps more at the level of deliberate contrivance) in *Paradise Lost*, and which goes back to the origins of our tragic drama in Greek culture.¹ The 'order' of the poem, Mr. Mack is able to demonstrate, is by no means only the order of the Newtonian cosmos, though, of course, it includes this order. Pope's 'order' is compounded of many elements: the tradition of Platonic and Aristotelian cosmology; the *concors discordia* of Heraclitus; the hierarchical conceptions of the pseudo-Dionysius; the Pauline teaching on unity in the Body of Christ; and others.²

Pope's anthropology, too, can be traced to more remote and deeper sources than Bolingbroke. He qualifies the murderous simplifications of Montaigne, Hobbes, and Mandeville.³ The conception, Christian at root, of man as a ruined masterpiece is integral to the poem. He is unable (Mr. Mack suggests that the 'story had lost, perhaps, its full imaginative availability')⁴ to use the Biblical account of the Fall. He has instead to use the contemporary myth of a 'state of nature'. But there is a Fall—Pope's state of nature is rather Locke's than Hobbes's; and the emphasis on *pride*, often given very nearly its full theological value, is unmistakable throughout the poem. Pride, *hubris*, is for Pope, as it had been for Milton, the source of man's ruin, and humility is among the chief virtues.

In these and in other ways Mr. Mack, whilst admitting that the *Essay* is a 'conceptual mutation of a mystic (*sic*) theme [which] perhaps reflects the movement of the modern mind towards its self-extinction',⁵ shows that a fresh analysis of the poem and a tracing of it to its authentic sources may go some distance towards making it possible for us to be deeply moved in the reading of it. He does not make extravagant claims; but he does show that,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. liii.

² *Ibid.*, pp. liv ff. Mr. Wilson Knight has pointed out that Pope in *Windsor Forest* employed the forest as a superb symbol of cosmic order.

Not Chaos-like together crush'd and bruis'd,
But, as the world, harmoniously confus'd;
Where order in variety we see,
And where, though all things differ, all agree.

G. Wilson Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 131. This seems neither mechanistic nor over-rationalistic.

³ Mack, p. lxvii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. lxiv.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. lxv.

properly approached, *An Essay on Man* may, at least while we remain under the influence of an attentive reading, give us a conviction that 'there is a fecundity and comprehensiveness in the Creation and in man himself which man cannot do justice to otherwise than by trusting it for what it is, and simultaneously an ideal order, unity, harmony, and purpose which man must both support and help to realize by disciplining himself'.¹ All this is not (I would suggest) the argument of the *Essay* reduced to propositional form; such a reduction would produce nothing so consistent; but it is a statement correlative with the experience the poem has within its power to bestow upon the reader.

Note: So far as I can judge it, Mr. Mack's editorial work is beyond praise. I am a little surprised that he fails to instance as relevant to Pope's use of the 'analogy of nature' in Epistle I Butler's *Analogy* and Berkeley's discussion of the same question in *Alciphron*. I do not find convincing his tentative suggestion² that 'Pope's sense of corporateness' was derived from his Catholicism. Pope's Catholicism, such as it was, no doubt was a genuine part of his life; but nothing Pope writes on this subject would be surprising were he not a Catholic. Lastly, I should have thought Jenyns worthy of a reference in connexion with the later fortunes of 'whatever is, is right'. The first reference in the Index to Berkeley should be xxiii, not xxii.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. lxxx.

² *Ibid.*, pp. lxxiv, lxxv.

GEORGES BERNANOS: HIS LIFE AND WORK¹

By OSWALT VON NOSTITZ²

GEORGES BERNANOS always spoke about his life with great reserve. He was aware that he was the vessel of a truth of which all his works—his novels as well as his polemical writings—bear witness; yet he was the least arrogant of men. He once characterized this humility by saying that he had nothing to add to this truth, that it was rather his duty to try to prove himself worthy of it: he was more its prison than its altar. As we look back on his life and work they make the impression of a unity. It must be admitted, however, that the life of Bernanos was not one of serene balance in the Goethean or Hellenic sense of the word. He himself once went so far as to call it a 'dog's life', thereby suggesting the inner strife of a destiny that was perhaps not rich in outward events but was constantly menaced by ruptures and catastrophes. He never concealed or patched up these fissures although he did try to overcome them on a higher level in his work. His words retained their freshness and radiancy because none of them was ever the product of artistic trifling: on the contrary, they were all the expression of a fundamental integrity which recognized no division between life and thought, no living in two worlds at the same time.

To the very end he remained true to his origins, and, above all, he was always aware that his childhood was the fertile soil from which he drew his lifelong nourishment. From the scanty auto-biographical material which he left and from the reports of his friends it is possible to sketch the following rough picture of those early years.

¹ A translation of the introduction to a selection of Bernanos' works and letters to be published this summer by Der Verlag der Arche, Zürich, to whom acknowledgement is made.

² Oswalt von Nostitz is a German critic and essayist especially interested in the interpretation of modern Christian thought. He is preparing German editions of Péguy and of Saint-Exupéry's posthumous work, *La Citadelle*, and has just published a little book on Georges Bernanos (Pilger Verlag, Speyer).

Georges Bernanos came from a pious but in no sense bigoted Catholic family. His father was a native of Lorraine and may have had some Spanish blood. His ancestors had lived in San Domingo for two centuries after one of them had played an important part in the conquest of the island and fallen in the fighting. His mother's family, on the other hand, came from the interior of France: the Moreaus were a poor peasant family from Pellevoisin, a small village south-east of Tours that became a place of pilgrimage in the middle of the nineteenth century after an appearance of the Virgin. These country folk from the most thoroughly French part of France were no mere picturesque rustics, however; their scanty lives were constantly afflicted by all manner of tragedies. From them Bernanos, who was above all the son of his mother, probably received the deepest but at the same time the most turbulent elements of his character.

He was born in Paris on 20 February, 1888. At the time his father was running a small decorator's business there; later he acquired a considerable fortune and bought a fair-size house for himself in Fressin, a small village in Artois, where he lived with his family without professional responsibilities. Georges' most lasting childhood memories were connected with this country house, 'the dear old house where one could always hear the murmuring of the leaves and the running water'. The boy, who was a very keen sportsman, loved the spacious countryside of Artois with its woods and moors and plain-spoken inhabitants: the country aristocracy, the village priests, the peasants and poachers who were often anything but at their ease in social life, yet far from commonplace and who provided him with an early criterion of human greatness and gave wings to his imagination. In the Preface to the *Grands Cimetières sous la Lune* he has told how he used to return home from his long walks in the autumn and sit dreaming over the fire, with airy visions of the characters who were later to people his novels—Mouchette and Donissan, Cénabre, Chantal, the chaplain of Abricourt—visions which, long before dawn, would 'return to the silence of the soul, their hidden refuge'.

From his eleventh year he attended various boarding-schools, first in Paris then in Bourges and Aire-sur-le Lys. A photograph from the Paris years shows him lost in thought but with the trace of a smile around the corner of his mouth, with big and clear eyes which seem to be alertly and eagerly intent on the outer and inner world. It is easy to appreciate why the boy found it difficult, lively

and self-willed as he was, to fit into the monotonous discipline of a boarding-school. 'It's a terribly boring life in our schools', the fifty-year-old Bernanos wrote, looking back on his schooldays. But it was in those years that he began the first of the friendships that were among the most vital needs of his life. And then came the holidays in Fressin when he buried himself in his father's library; in addition to Balzac, Walter Scott and Barbey d'Aurevilly he was already reading Ernest Hello, who was raising his voice in warning against the spirit of the age and instituting the *Renouveau Catholique*. Mention should be made, too, of another encounter of that early period: his father often read aloud to him from the pages of the *Parole Libre* in which the anti-semitic Edouard Drumont was expounding his radical criticism of the France of the 'Third Republic'—the same Drumont whom Bernanos later commemorated in *La Grande Peur des Bien Pensants*; admittedly, this was in memory less of the doctrine than of the lonely struggle of the 'old lion' who was the first teacher of the future controversialist.

In the case of Bernanos the transition from childhood to youth was not accompanied by the crisis which almost all the others who left their mark on the *Renouveau Catholique* went through. He was spared the necessity of fighting for his faith all over again; his mother—an intellectually gifted woman, who long hoped that her son would enter the priesthood—had laid the foundations of his faith once and for all. But there were other difficulties that Bernanos the adolescent had to overcome. We learn of them from the moving letters which the seventeen-year-old boy wrote to a teacher who was also an intimate friend. He confessed that he was being constantly pursued by the fear of death. Even the tiniest indisposition seemed to be the 'prelude of the final illness' to which he looked forward with such anxiety. Admittedly, he does not in any sense lay down his arms or take refuge in the stoicism the convulsions of which he always detested. On the contrary, he already knew that that nightmare can only be overcome by the sacrifice of one's own person, 'by perfect self-surrender to life and death'. And when we read in one of the letters that it was the 'grace of his first communion' that it made him understand that death is the meaning of life, then we have the first signs of the religious solution of the problem which gave him the strength to overcome the danger to the end of his days.

Thus he was able to say, looking back on his life, that the grace of his eleventh year had been given to him afresh in all the

desperate hours he passed through. The fears which he had to overcome so often were in fact no passing phenomenon arising from the sickliness of a sensitive child but a basic feature of his character. This 'Christian of the Incarnation', who once confessed that he had loved the sweet kingdom of this earth more than he ever dared say, was filled with a particular horror of the disembodiment of death, a horror which several times developed into an anticipation of the final agony and found imaginative expression in the moving scenes of dying which are to be found somewhere in all his novels. Only with the aid of a supernatural hope was he able, like the knight in Dürer's woodcut, courageously to look his constant companion in the face.

As a matter of fact the tensions were solved for a time when, after the end of his schooldays in Paris, the eighteen-year-old lad became an active supporter of the *Action Française* and afterwards gave full scope to his polemical tendencies as a journalist working for monarchistic papers in Paris and Rouen. 'I was not exactly what good families call a serious young man . . . to make no bones about it: I loved a row.' That is how he described this period of his life in later years, though it was in this period that his first short stories were written that had death as their subject and appeared in 1913 and 1914 in the weekly paper (*L'Avant Garde de Rouen*) which he edited.

In 1914 he joined up as a volunteer and a new element entered into his life. He was certainly no austere puritan. It was about this time that he became engaged to a direct descendant of the brother of Joan of Arc—Jeanne Talbert d'Arc, who became his faithful wife and bore him six children—and the letters which he wrote to his fiancée from the field sparkle with high spirits and *joie de vivre*. But increasingly a deeper note is heard as well, a note heralding the Bernanos we know from his later works. He steers clear of all patriotic propaganda but feels all the more intensely that 'this war marks a boundary-line in the history of the world'. That is not intended to be taken in a political sense but from the same absolute standpoint from which the events of the time appeared to Léon Bloy—whom he was discovering at the time and from whom he received the strongest impression—in an apocalyptic light. And they are the words not of a disinterested observer but of one who was passionately moved by the surge of events. The letters that he wrote in 1918 and 1919 to his wife and to a close friend are confessions whose immediacy makes them almost more impressive

than their later transposition into literature. The point of view is already the same as in the great novels : the man who was able to find these Pascalian words had undergone a trial which made him see the world with different eyes, for the main experience of these war years was the *fear* which, as he himself says, never left him for a second at the front. The child's fear of death and the experiences of his schooldays were renewed and made immeasurably deeper. At the same time, however, he grasps his own position as a fellow-sufferer and fellow-worker in the process of salvation, on whom God's eyes are fixed in the very midst of the terrible, Satanic present. Thus he sees himself up against an ultimate decision : 'If others still allow themselves to be carried along by the waves or by the light, what concern of ours is that, for we shall never know peace again—never again !' Yet this restlessness is not an expression of despair, but of 'the fear of hope', which does not shrink from, but rather derives strength and comfort from the suffering of Gethsemane.

When Bernanos returned home from the war he was forced to realize that he stood very much alone with his experience. In *La France contre les Robots* he described this loneliness which was never to leave him thereafter but which weighed particularly heavily on him during the post-war years in which everyone was trying to forget the warnings of destiny in a welter of narcotic triviality. He believed that he was called all the more urgently to help his brethren. It is in this sense that the remark is to be understood that he came to take up writing at that time in the same way as the Abbot Rancé became a trappist on seeing the worm-eaten face of his dead beloved, and he made it quite clear that what impelled him to become a writer was no mere aesthetic impulse but a mission to try and teach the more unhappy of his comrades. He wanted to shake up his fellow men, to speak to the men of his age who, consciously or unavowedly, were living on the brink of Nothingness ; he wanted to show them that the salvation of their souls was at stake and thus his writing became more passionate, more fear-ridden—as Augustine's *Confessions* and Pascal's *Pensées* are passionate and fear-ridden—and at the same time more profoundly contemporary than if all he had been concerned with had been the purely literary game of novel-writing.

Admittedly, that is but one side of the work which was maturing at the time. The reason why it found such a response was in fact because it was not blatantly didactic but an authentically

literary creation. In one of his letters he says that it had taken him twenty years to produce 'an imaginative world of peculiar greatness'; this was the time needed for the dream-world of the boy in Fressin to acquire reality, but it never disavowed its origin. Thus he was able to say of his books that all the good things in them came from a very great distance, from 'the deep sources of childhood' and that his vocation consisted precisely in striking the notes that he had once heard many years ago.

Bernanos began work on his first great book, *Le Soleil de Satan* only a few weeks after the Armistice; it was six years before he finished it, six years during which he was forced to earn his living by wearing himself out as an insurance agent. The unusual success of the book then induced him to devote his whole time to writing. Whilst he had to fight against constant financial worries, the novels *L'Imposture* and *La Joie* were written. Then followed an interval of seven years which is only inadequately explained by external reasons—such as his having been very busy in the political arena. In reality it was a period of deep inner suffering. The silence was broken only after a motor-cycle accident in September 1933. All of a sudden the five last novels were written in less than two years: *Un crime*, *Le journal d'un curé de campagne*, *L'Histoire de Mouchette*, *Un Mauvais Rêve*—which appeared posthumously in 1950—and finally *Monsieur Ouine*, which was, however, not finished until 1945.

The world which emerges from these great books is best understood by contrasting it with the other literature of the same period, dominated by the psychological novel, which had reached its ultimate refinement at the hands of Proust and Joyce and which was intent on sealing up the sphere of the spiritual, sheltering it from the supernatural and illuminating the newly discovered sphere of the unconscious with the methods of depth-psychology, depriving it of its mystery and terror by analytical dissection. Even religious *belles-lettres* were scarcely any different fundamentally. Insofar as the aim was not moral improvement within a carefully fenced-in garden, kept separate from the general climate of the time, religious writers, including even men like Mauriac, joined in the universal fashion, wrote psychological novels, often in a historical disguise, into which a religious truth, such as the workings of grace, was introduced as unobtrusively as possible. Bernanos was the first to break with this kind of psychology. He too describes the most secret impulses of the spirit but without arguing away the

existence of the inexplicable by so-called 'motivations'. He strives to grasp the whole of reality and in his view the action of the supernatural is a part of the whole, which cannot be deciphered and cannot be limited to a clearly demarcated sphere. The novelist had everything to lose, he once said, referring to Proust, if he excluded God and the devil from his work. And he exhorted the Catholic writer not to lag behind the others in the descent into the abyss, for he bore a torch in his hand.

He himself investigated the *Mysterium Iniquitatis* in a way that no one else since Dostoevsky had been able to. His novels display the satanic in all its ramifications. In the *Soleil de Satan* he even introduced the adversary in person, behind the mask of a horse-dealer, in order to draw special attention to a figure whose existence had been hushed up or denied for so long. In the books that followed, however, he gave up the method of direct presentation: in these works Satan appears only indirectly, but he is no less present in his victims and demonic accomplices—as, for instance, in the Abbé Cénabre in *L'Imposture*, a man grown hard with intellectual arrogance, in the daughter of the nun in the *Crime*, a girl dominated by lying, in the sentimental murderer Fjodor in *La Joie*, and the cold dissector of souls, Monsieur Ouine. Especially in *Monsieur Ouine* he succeeded in making visible the modern form of the Satanic—which prefers mediocrity to rebellious greatness and drives a dismembered, spiritually blunted and enervated world to madness or collective crime—in all its commonplaceness and monotony.

We must not, however, look at this dark aspect of the work in isolation. With Bernanos the black side is always intimately related to the Christian Gospel, for he knows that 'it is difficult to get on without Grace once the devil has been introduced into one's life', if one wants to shed some light on the human situation. And when man does not deliberately surrender himself to Evil, the Grace of God constantly finds secret ways by which to reach its goal. Satan's antagonists, the priests and saints, who visited the boy in his dreams, wage unceasing war on God's behalf.

In *Joan, Heretic and Saint* Bernanos says that the Church is the Church of the saints because it is based supremely on Love. And he adds: 'We owe our respects to the brave rear-guard of officials and clerks, but our hearts beat for the vanguard . . .' The priests who are central in most of his novels, belong to this vanguard. To quote the words of Donissan in the *Soleil de Satan*, they form 'God's

final bulwark' in a life and death struggle, although they do not all resist to the last. The story of the Abbé Cénabre in *L'Imposture* and *La Joie*, who has lost his faith and finally breaks up altogether by playing a double game, is an example of a typical failure. But even those who belong to the communion of saints are constantly threatened: the Abbé Chevance in *L'Imposture*, who dies a wretched death in ultimate humility and self-denial, the saintly girl Chantal in *La Joie*, Donissan in the *Soleil de Satan*, who draws blood by his self-inflicted flagellation in order to overcome a feeling of inward happiness, the awkward and poorly chaplain of Abricourt in the *Journal d'un curé de campagne*—all these are no merely ethereal beings, but persons who have grown out of the sufferings and fears of the age. Bernanos once said of them that to some extent they represented unfinished projects who could not claim to communicate the mysticism of true sanctity. What he had in mind, he said, was 'to rediscover in them our disappointed love, the dangerous despair which contains the seeds of hatred, purged and sublimated by Grace', and to pass on their message to his brethren. It is only in the two hagiographic studies from his pen that something of the radiance of those saintly lives is caught, which—as he says in *Dominikus*, herald as it were 'a new golden age' in the world of original sin and which are the 'effusion of a wonderful, paradisical innocence'.

* * *

Thus the great struggle between God and Satan, the interplay between the power of evil and the power of grace, is central in the novels of Bernanos and one can only admire the skill with which he was able to sail round the dangerous reefs of this theological theme. Although he has been accused of Manicheism, especially with regard to the *Soleil de Satan*, closer investigation shows that he never conferred the same power on God and Satan. He was always aware that the power of the evil one—no counter-god, but a fallen angel—remains questionable and menaced, and even the Abbé Donissan, in all his distress, knows that the evil one will be defeated on the Day of Judgement. The people in these novels are not the irresolute tools of supernatural powers: the final word of the *Curé de campagne*: 'All is Grace' is not to be taken as meaning that man is the plaything of these powers. Again and again the mysterious communion which exists between freedom and grace is illuminated and every kind of determinism is rejected in a phrase from

L'Imposture which holds good for his whole work: 'No one is hurled into the abyss before he has torn his heart away from the awful and gentle hand, before he has felt its pressure. No one is abandoned who has not first committed the real blasphemy of denying not only the justice but also the love of God.'

We have already seen how the idea of death had preoccupied Bernanos from his early youth. The fact that almost all the main characters in his novels—Donissan in the *Soleil de Satan*, Cénabre and Chantal in *La Joie*, Mouchette in the *Nouvelle Histoire de Mouchette*—have to pass through a panic-like spasm of fear allied to the fear of death, which completely dominates books like *Un Crime* and *Monsieur Ouine*, is based on Bernanos' own spiritual experience. The death scenes always take place with a cruel relentless-ness from which even the saints are not spared. And yet despair never has the last word. It is no mere accident that, in his last work, the *Dialogues des Carmélites* (written as a film scenario), which are modelled on Gertrud von Le Fort's short story *Die letzte am Schaffott*, Bernanos again takes up the problem of the fear of death, describing in the most affecting terms, in the dying of the Prioress, the horror of the final hour—its bleak loneliness, in which 'even God turns to a shadow', and then showing the religious solution already suggested in his war-time letters: the young nun Blanche de la Force who has already chosen for herself the name of the 'holy agony' and who 'was born in fear and lived in fear', is given the grace of assimilating her distress to the suffering of the Crucified and thereby overcoming it. She goes singing to the scaffold, 'whilst her face seems to be rid of all fear'.

The confidence expressed here is to be appraised all the more highly in that it did not come easily to Bernanos, as a ripe fruit falling into his lap. When he makes Donissan say, in the *Soleil de Satan*, that he is more cut out for mourning than for joy, he seems to be making a confession of his own weakness and he also admitted that the question '*À quoi bon?*' had been the worst temptation of his life. The bitter melancholy which sometimes finds expression in his books and which reminds the reader of the age-old tradition of Franco-Celtic Christianity with its tendency towards a cult of the dead, may be attributable to his maternal inheritance. Nevertheless, he is not unacquainted with joy and the part which devolves upon it in the Christian cosmos. In the novel which bears the name of Joy, in some moments of her tortured existence it is bestowed on the pure and innocent Chantal in the form of an encounter with

the Divine. Even Donissan comes to know it on his sorrowful ways, though it visits him but rarely. But we find it above all in the book that is perhaps Bernanos' maturest and most balanced creation: *Le journal d'un curé de campagne*. Here it is the curé of Torcy who expresses a fundamental Christian joyfulness. He knows that 'everything done against the Church is done against joy'.

The first years of professional writing were hardly the easiest in this restless life. Even the periods of productivity were times of inner strain as Bernanos usually had to wrestle arduously with his material and sometimes came to know moments of 'complete inner nudity' which oppressed but did not cripple him. A secluded absorption in his work was never granted to him. In the last resort his constant moving from one house and province to another was merely the expression of a continuous spiritual restlessness. And in addition to the many worries and tragedies of his family life there was no lack of campaigns and arguments to call forth the controversialist in him. First of all there was the condemnation of the *Action Française* and in particular of the teaching of Charles Maurras, which led him into a fierce conflict until he finally renounced the companions of his youth and settled accounts with Maurras in *Nous autres Français*. The serious motor-cycle accident already mentioned, which made him an invalid for the rest of his life, made him more than ever dependent on the written word. But it was above all the increasingly critical state of world affairs and the intensification of the war of ideas which forced the controversialist in this Christian knight into the open.

The Spanish civil war which he saw from close quarters on Palma de Mallorca was the call to arms. If he had remained true to family tradition he would have sided with Franco; his oldest son did in fact join the Falangists. It was therefore a breathtaking surprise even for his most intimate friends to read (in the *Grands Cimetières sous la Lune*) the angry and ironical descriptions of the events in Mallorca, in which the suppression of the red Catalans by the adherents of Franco and the aid afforded him by the Spanish Church were painted in the strongest possible colours. As in all his polemical work, Bernanos was not concerned with the politics and propaganda of the case, but was impelled by the burning concern of the Christian who feels responsible for the actions of his own fellow-Christians.

When, in the years that followed, he saw the growing shadows of the approaching catastrophe, he still regarded political events

only as an aspect of the sufferings of Christ. That was also true of his reaction to the Munich Agreement which filled him with such shame that he welcomed the fact of separation from his native country. In accordance with a dream of his youth he had emigrated to South America in July 1938; he tried to make a living by buying a farm in Brazil—a venture that ended in failure. Sadness and loneliness and a passionate interest in the fate of his native land are the main notes of the diary—the *Enfants humiliés*—and letters of those years. His purely literary work receded to the background. In Brazil he merely finished *Monsieur Ouine*; otherwise he wrote exclusively polemical tracts and articles, in which he raised his warning voice over and over again.

It would be wrong, however, to value this last phase of his work less highly and attribute a merely ephemeral significance to it. In reality even these occasional productions were always written *sub specie aeternitatis*: they were concerned with the same problems that had moved the author of the *Soleil de Satan*, only they expressed them even more directly. Like Léon Bloy and Charles Péguy, Bernanos was no mere politician of the passing day even when he was broaching the most topical problems. Like those other 'pilgrims of the absolute' he knew but one great theme: the question of salvation as it confronts the man of the 'modern world'.

There is no romanticism about his campaign against the 'modern world' even though he sometimes uses somewhat faded metaphors which he had learnt during his apprenticeship in the *Action Française*. He does not criticize the technical age as such but acknowledges that it is a 'justified form of human activity' insofar as man does not allow a metaphysical fear to foist the rhythm and mechanical subservience of technics on his soul. For the deadly menace which he sees arising lies in man himself, who is on the point of giving up his personality and subjecting himself to the enslavement of a 'society without God' in which frozen ideas acquire an abstract life of their own and thereby destroy all inner life. In this way there arises in the 'modern world' an order of hatred, which Bernanos traced back (in his Geneva address in 1946) to the 'thousand-times more profound and clear-sighted' hatred of the fallen angel.

Nothing was further from his intention, however, than to retire to a Christian sulking-corner. Again and again he declares that 'the Christian front has been pierced' and that it is precisely the

'mediocre Christians' who bear the main responsibility for the way things have developed. With the monotonous insistence of the Litany he apostrophizes the allegedly worldly wise who come to terms with the devil himself, to save their skins, the '*Imbéciles*', by which are meant not the poor in spirit, but precisely those who, in spite of their intellectual abilities and knowledge, have no trace of feeling for the higher reality; in their narrowness they fall into a state of dangerous dependence which expresses itself in blind anger and unprincipled fear.

Bernanos brings his charges with the bluntness and absoluteness of the prophet but he never succumbs to the arrogance of the Pharisee. He knows that even the *imbécile* is not excluded from God's mercy; perhaps, he says in the *Enfants humiliés*, the stupid share the dignity of the poor. And however gloomy the diagnosis, despair never wins the day. 'Why do I need to know if I possess hope, so long as I have a share in its works,' he writes to a friend in the last years of his life. Admittedly, he is always aware that the Kingdom of God cannot be organized, that the Church of God was not made to serve as a 'spiritual gendarmerie'. His concern, both in his novels and his polemical writings, is 'to kindle the powers of the spirit', to call up the vanguard which is to prepare the way for the longed-for revolution, the fundamental *Renovatio christiana*. To this vanguard belong, alongside the saints, those 'free men' who take earthly honour as their guiding-principle but will never allow a conscience-destroying power to take the noblest gift of God, freedom of choice, out of their hands.

Bernanos did not abandon his hope when he followed the call of General de Gaulle after the end of the war and returned to France. It is true that a bitter disappointment awaited him there, since he became convinced that the *Libération* had led to no true liberation of the spirit and that the hoped-for renewal had failed to appear. He now no longer put any confidence in the living and the impending atomic age filled him with gloomy forebodings. But even though apocalyptic expectations occasionally appeared to take the upper hand, his faith in a supernaturally-determined revival of his native land and of humanity in general, remained unbroken. Thus the bitter preface to the collection of his war-time essays (*Chemin de la Croix des Ames*), ends with the proclamation of 'a world-wide Revolution . . . of man created in the image of God against the material'—a revolution by means of which France would again become the 'heart and head of a renewed humanity'.

His own vital energies were broken, however. With the marks of death already upon him, he moved restlessly from place to place in those last years—for ever like Parzival, as if searching for peace somewhere on the earth. At the beginning of 1947 he again left France and moved to Gabes and then Hammamet in Tunis. On the day on which he finished *Les Dialogues des Carmélites* he was struck down by a serious liver complaint. An operation carried out in the American hospital in Neuilly was not successful. For several weeks he hovered between life and death. On the evening of 4 July, 1948 he realized that he was about to enter his 'holy agony'. Once again the powers of darkness seemed to rise up against him. A cry in the night in which he died—*A nous deux*—seems to show that he defied them for the last time until the great peace came over him: the face that had radiated such flaming intensity in life, on which joy and suffering had left deep marks, now recovered the innocent smile of childhood.

THE SOLITUDE OF JACQUES COPEAU

By JEAN MAMBRINO, S.J.

'L'insatisfaction m'habitait'.
Souvenirs du Vieux Colombier.

JACQUES COPEAU died on 20 October, 1949. This is the right moment to speak of him when the crowd seems to have forgotten him, and when his death, with all its immense significance, is no more than a distant, an almost vanished, echo for the journalists who are now so busily besieged with other matters. In the case of Copeau, actuality is not really so very important.

During the weeks following his death we saw a considerable number of articles loud in their praise and touching, sometimes rather perfunctorily, on the success and the significance of his work. Copeau never cared about praise, and it was very rarely that anyone attempted to lay their finger on the central point where the astonishing unity of his whole life was revealed. From the moment of his first flight, when he left home at the age of twenty, until his solitary death in Burgundy, and including the famous flight from Paris in 1924, which most of his critics still fail to understand, his life had one direction—and it is the nature of this direction that we have now to discover. In the same way, as Claudel would say, we establish the direction in which a stream is moving. A few months before he died a number of eminent writers—all of them his friends—collaborated to do him honour in a special number of *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*. It is not possible to read these tributes without a certain consternation. Warm with feeling and fervour as many of them are, they still reveal, almost without exception, a kind of pathetic incapacity to reach the spiritual plane where Copeau's dramatic destiny was played out. One can sense, in spite of the most flattering eulogies, a regret, a persisting nostalgia, and sometimes even a sort of secret irritation, which expresses very well the reaction of most of his friends before what they call the semi-failure of his life.

Nevertheless, Copeau has left us the clues to understand him. We have only to read his life with the requisite interior attention, 'down to the commas, down to the most imperceptible shadow of a meaning', as if it were a text, a poem, where the sense of the first lines only becomes apparent at the end. And that is what we must try to do here—follow him, step by step, through the principal stages of his life, illuminate them by his writings and reflexions, and, most importantly, throw upon each particular episode the light generated by the whole. Thus we shall see the gradual appearance and definition of what we may call 'his vocation to solitude'—and this will be made plain over the course of a life which was sometimes agitated and which was companioned, right up to the end, by the most illustrious friendships. The profound meaning of this solitude will become clear in the course of this study. The word may have a paradoxical ring, but if we look at Copeau's life in this perspective we shall surely be able to discover the secret orientation of a destiny which was not only magnificent in itself but carries an instruction for us all.

My father was a *bourgeois* of the Faubourg St. Denis, where I was born on 4 February, 1879. Following a long-established tradition among the *bourgeois* of this noble *faubourg*, he had a great passion for the theatre. He used often to take me there. I went to school at the Lycée Condorcet where my professor in Greek was a charming old man, Père Terrier, and my professor in philosophy was M. Izoulet. One day the students gave a show at the *Nouveau Théâtre*. They acted a play of mine, *Brouillard du Matin*. Francisque Sarcey was there : he was the tutor of E. About's boy, Jean About, who was a pupil of the Lycée, and was also acting in the show. I was introduced to the famous critic, who wrote an article about my play in *Le Temps* the next morning. My family were both flattered and disturbed by these dramatic goings-on, for they had, naturally, made up their minds to send me to the Ecole Normale.¹

This is how Jacques Copeau himself evokes for us certain pictures of his early life. We are glad that he should be a Parisian, a native of the Faubourg St. Denis, and that, even as a boy, he should have loved the theatre. But the easy course of this life was suddenly interrupted by his father's death. Copeau had now to face up, much sooner than he had thought, to the material necessities. The flame which was to consume him throughout his life was already stirring, the obscure and

¹ *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 19 February, 1927: 'Une heure avec M. Jacques Copeau, par F. Lefèvre.

violent impulse towards a yet unknown horizon. At twenty-three he married a Danish girl, and leaving home, family, and motherland, he went with her to Denmark. There he remained for a year, making a living by giving lessons in French. Let us not underestimate the importance of this first departure. It has, on the contrary, a rich significance, and it points the way to the future. It is already the sign of a mysterious vocation. It is a first and violent *rupture*, a seeking after 'other things' beyond the accommodations and petty obligations of daily life. Copeau himself, twenty-five years later, will remind us of it.

One can easily imagine this year of solitude in Denmark, the sudden shift from one country to another, and all the slow-thinking faces, talking to him in a language he cannot understand. To be sure, he breathed a new atmosphere, and this must have been in itself a refreshment after the constraints of family life; it had the charm of another world. But it certainly did not prevent him from experiencing a profound sensation of exile; he felt that he had set himself to one side, and that all his youthful abilities were wasting for want of employment. Nevertheless, he was already beginning to write his first articles which appeared in *L'Ermitage*. The very first, appropriately enough, was a scathing attack on Paul Henrion. The second was devoted to 'L'Immoraliste', and that was the beginning of his friendship with André Gide.

'I was bored in Denmark.'¹ He admitted it himself and in 1904 he came back to France. 'I had to go and install myself in a village of the Ardennes, Raucourt, where I was manager of a small iron-works, inherited from my father. I stayed there a year, utterly discontented with a life which had nothing in common with my natural tastes.' It is not difficult to guess what this second year of almost total isolation must have been like, the days slowly eaten away by the drudgery. Strange indeed to imagine Copeau as a businessman, but all the same this second exile mysteriously completes his novitiate of silence. Even if he showed no great capacity in his rôle and was obliged to sell the factory, we may well suppose that many elements of his future work secretly matured, without his knowledge perhaps, in the silence of this year, passed in a provincial retreat.

And then, once again, it is Paris. He must earn his living, so he enters the employment of G. Petit, where for four years, as he tells us, 'I sold pictures and watched all Paris go by.' It was an exciting

¹ Ibid.

and even a turbulent epoch; the whirlpool was beginning to engulf us. Copeau made friends with the most illustrious figures in art and literature, and it was about this time (in 1909 to be exact) that he played a prominent part in the foundation of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. He read a great deal, he worked, and he wrote. J. Rouche made him dramatic critic of *La Grande Revue*, where he succeeded Léon Blum. His duties brought him more and more closely in contact with the world of the theatre, and he was disgusted with its low standards, its mediocrity. A terrible anger and indignation took possession of him when he contemplated the degradation of an art which contained, as he well knew, all the possibilities of greatness. 'It was the time,' as he said later, 'when I would come out from the second performance of a play by Donnay or Brieu, and begin to translate into moderate language the anger which kept me warm, which made the pavements easy under my feet and the streets bright before my eyes—the anger which shortened my way home.'¹

The proof that this brilliant Parisian life failed to satisfy him, failed to stifle the impatient voice inside him, can be seen in his new departure. In 1910 Rouche took the 'Théâtre des Arts' and Copeau promised him an adaptation of *The Brothers Karamazov*. He then left G. Petit, and installed himself in a little hamlet, Le Limon, near La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, in the department of Seine-et-Marne. This new retreat, this new manifestation of his vocation to solitude, when everything, to all appearances, should have kept him in Paris, was an anticipation of a later, more celebrated, exile. Here he stayed for the last three years before the founding of the Vieux Colombier, reading, meditating, lapsed in a natural calm, and listening more and more intently to his inner voice. It was here that he would form his company in July 1913, before the opening of his famous season. What an astonishing appetite for solitude! What a long preparation before he felt himself ready to deliver his prophetic message! He was already thirty-five years old. But what he had to say was all the more powerful for having been contained in silence for so long. 'Ripeness is all'—the hour had come at last.

On 1 September, 1913, an article by Jacques Copeau appeared in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, entitled 'Un Essai de Rénovation Dramatique—le Théâtre du Vieux Colombier'. It came like a clap

¹ *Nouvelle Revue Française*: 'Manifeste de J. Copeau'.

of thunder in the middle of a clear sky. At last a great voice was making itself heard, whose power, assurance, and irresistible youth would blast the degradation of the modern stage. Copeau was certainly aware of his solitude in face of the immense forces he had chosen to attack. 'There is no point in taking an enterprise in hand, unless everyone is against it.' This is how he begins—with the call of a trumpet. But neither 'the ironic warnings of the professional theatre folk', nor 'the pessimistic forebodings of the timid and the sceptical', nor 'the advice of those well satisfied with the current theatrical fare and therefore prone to extol its excellence', could stop him. 'Words have no power,' he adds, 'over the man who has deliberately sacrificed himself to an idea and professes to serve it.' There is a *tone* in the language used by a man which demonstrates beyond any possibility of doubt the plane on which he is moving and the resolution by which he is fired.

Listen to the fury of the young prophet explode in the face of the degradation into which the theatre of his country had fallen and the almost universal indifference with which it was regarded.

An unlicensed industrialism which day by day cynically degrades our French stage and drives away from it the cultivated public: the monopoly of most of our theatres by a handful of entertainers in the pay of merchants who have lost all sense of shame: everywhere, even in those theatres where a great tradition should safeguard a certain decency, the same speculation and the same theatricality, the same lack of honesty: everywhere the same bluff, the same auctioning of every kind of exhibitionism, paralysing an art which is dying of its dishonour, an art no longer worthy of the name: everywhere robbery, disorder, indiscipline and stupidity, contempt of the creative mind, and hatred of the beautiful: productions which become more and more devoid of significance and reason, criticism which becomes more and more complacent, a public taste gone further and further astray—that is what makes us indignant, that is what makes us rise up in protest.

What does Copeau suggest in order that the ground lost by this decadence shall be regained? He first of all defines the three areas of combat—the play, the player and the production. There can be no better way of restoring to the theatre its purity and its grandeur than to oppose to the products of the commercial theatre the great works of the past, 'the classics, both ancient and modern, whether French or foreign'. Here he would have of course included Péguy. In doing this the producer must put himself in 'a condition of sen-

sibility' while he studies them, so that he can make them appear in all their original freshness, which is too often stifled by 'the mechanical tricks of certain actors and by the routine of a so-called tradition'. But that does not mean that he must try to modernize them, to hot them up. Good heavens, no:

We must never attempt to accommodate Molière or Racine to the fashion of the hour, under the pretext of bringing them closer to us. A pretty joke indeed to rejuvenate from the outside that which is eternal in its essence, to season with a spice of modern verisimilitude that which is more true than truth itself! These fantasies are forbidden us. The only originality in our interpretation, if we have any, will come from a deeper understanding of the texts.

This fundamental attitude of Copeau appears from the very beginning; the respect due to the work of art, the scrupulous search for authenticity. So is the strong feeling for a living tradition which lights up from within all the creative initiatives of the present. 'There is no lasting renewal which is not attached to a continuous or a recovered tradition, no revolution which is not rooted in the most distant secrets of a tradition supposed to be dead.' These lines taken from *L'Ecole du Vieux Colombier: Cahiers du Vieux Colombier*, No. 2, 1921, may be compared with a remark of T. S. Eliot quoted in the *Figaro Littéraire*, 13 November, 1948. 'If we approach a poet without prejudice, we shall often find that not only the best but also the most personal portions of his work, are those in which his ancestors, the poets of the past, most vigorously affirm their immortality. And I am not referring here to the malleable period of a poet's youth; I am referring to his ripe maturity.' Or again with Chesterton's 'All the men in history who have really had something to do with moulding the future had their eyes fixed upon the past.'

To the great classics of the past one should add the most varied products of the 'last thirty years', as well as any unpublished play of unquestioned theatrical quality. In any case there was no suggestion of presenting a 'revolutionary programme'.

We do not feel the need of a revolution: our eyes are fixed on too many great models for that. We have no faith in the efficacy of aesthetic formulae which are born and die every month in the little coteries, and whose intrepidity derives chiefly from their ignorance. We do not know what the theatre of tomorrow will be like. We make no prophecies. But we are resolved to react against all the cowardly evasions of the contemporary stage.¹

¹ 'Manifeste', p. 5.

Jacques Copeau would renew this intention even more forcibly in 1920, when he formed his School; the six intervening years had enriched him with a heavy load of experience.

Faced with the degradation of the actor's art, due to the detestable theatrical morals of the time—vanity, abuse of the star-system, and readiness to seize the main chance—Copeau, as we shall see, showed the same exactingness and the same high ideals. He sought to recover the notion of 'team-work' with all that it implies of self-dedication and detachment. He wanted to recruit

a company of young actors, disinterested and enthusiastic, who are ambitious to serve the art which they have adopted. To strip the actor of his staginess: to create around him an atmosphere more suitable to his development as man and artist: to educate him: to inspire his conscience and initiate him into the morality of his art—all our efforts will be obstinately directed to this end. We shall strive unceasingly to make the gifts of the individual more supple and to subordinate them to the ensemble. We shall be opposed to all the tricks and exaggerations of a false professionalism, to the ankylosis of specialization. Finally we shall do our best to make these men and women more normal whose vocation it is to affect all the gestures and motions of their human kind. We shall summon them, as far as possible, from the theatre into contact with nature and with life.¹

We shall notice the spiritual considerations which animate Copeau's reforms, even where they seem most humble. The same sense of the greatness of man is evident in his astonishing *Réflexions sur le Paradoxe de Diderot*, where he meditates on the monstrous (the word is Shakespeare's) vocation of the actor who 'risks the loss of his visible identity and the loss of his soul'.² We shall see later, when we study his second Manifesto, published at the same time as he founded his school, some of the solutions he suggests. We shall see how far he found it necessary to attempt a real, spiritual education of the actor. To remake the theatre, he would say to Suzanne Bing, '*il faut tuer l'acteur*'. That was his point of view from the start.

Finally, he had to face the scenic extravagances of the period, with their abuse of machinery and décor. Here Copeau was equally opposed to a gross realism or a subtle illusionism, and he was relatively indifferent to the 'inventions of engineers or electricians'. He preferred poverty and austerity. If he lacked resources, so much the better; there was all the more need for

¹ 'Manifeste', p. 5.

² *Réflexions d'un Comédien sur le Paradoxe de Diderot*, Plon, p. 4.

inventiveness and youth, for liberty and daring. He was afraid, in fact, that too much 'external complexity' would have a bad effect on art. 'It would result in a slackening of tension and an enfeeblement of power. It would encourage the facile and the picturesque, and turn plays into fairy tales.'¹ Here, once again, we find his proud exactingness and the spiritual basis of his reforms, the perpetual resort to the interior springs of his being, which lend to his voice an accent which is unique in the history of the theatre. The snobs of the time, in their pettiness and stupidity, accused him of being 'a Jansenist of the stage'. The best reply to this is the remark of the workman who came out from one of Copeau's performances in a state of great enthusiasm and went round to a café close by the theatre. He made no bones about saying how much he had enjoyed himself, to which someone objected 'But they don't have any scenery in that theatre.' 'So much the better,' replied the workman, 'at least you can see what they are saying.' Copeau would have been delighted with this, for, in concluding his Manifesto, he had written :

We do not believe that in order to 'represent man in the totality of his experience' there is any need for a theatre 'where the scenery can arrive from below and be changed in the twinkling of an eye', nor that the future of our art 'is dependent on a matter of machinery' (H. Bataille, *Préface du Masque*). We must be careful not to relax: we must not confuse scenic and dramatic convention. If we destroy the first, that does not mean that we are not bound by the second. On the contrary—the servitude and gross artifice of the stage will work on us like a discipline and force us to concentrate all our truth in the feelings and actions of our characters. We ask for nothing better than for all the other props to disappear: all we need, for the new work we have in hand, is a bare stage.

Advice of such grandeur and purity, an inspiration of such authentic nobility, are not easy to resist. The magnificently impetuous *tempo* of this passage reveals, definitively, all the prophetic side of Jacques Copeau's character, the pathetic and triumphant nature of his appeal. But the prophet's vocation is nearly always to 'cry in the wilderness', surrounded by an implacable solitude out of which his word of fire, protected by this same margin of silence, arises to illuminate the future. In fact, the Manifesto was hardly heard outside a limited circle, and very few grasped the importance of its message. Eleanore Duse, it is true,

¹ 'Manifeste', p. 7.

only a few days after its publication in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, wrote to Jacques Copeau on 6 September, 1913, sending him her subscription and 'her good wishes which were the expression of a profound solidarity'.¹ But the critics knew how to stifle this proud voice under the thick silence of hostility or disdain, and as for the crowd, indifference was the only thing to be expected of them. Copeau—the solitary; yes, he had been solitary from the beginning. His solitude was all part of his mission.

Once the programme had been laid down, it remained to carry it out. The famous season opened on 22 October, 1913, with old Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, and, more importantly, with *L'Amour Médecin*. This play, in which Jouvet began his career as one of the two doctors, was acted with a brilliant freshness and youth. The public was both reticent and aghast; the old habits were too strong. Only a few people understood. André Suarès wrote with great enthusiasm to Copeau, 'I have never seen Molière better served.' And Léon Daudet: 'There is something here that will grow.' But the professional critics gave little support to the actors. 'These fat gentlemen either failed to turn up at all, or left before the end of the show',² and M. de Pavlowski wrote the next morning, 'Like Molière, M. Copeau performs—but he doesn't perform any better.'

For five months Copeau and his young company battled with courage and faith. Molière led the way with *L'Avare*, where Dullin scored a great hit, *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, *Le Misanthrope*, *La Jalouse de Barbouille*. Then came *Barberine*, Becque's *La Navette*, J. Renard's *Le Pain de menage*, R. Martin du Gard's *Le Testament du Père Leleu*, Jean Schlumberger's *Les Fils Louverné*, and Claudel's *L'Echange*. The stalls public, Pierre Varillon tells us, politely applauded, but the young people who filled the cheaper seats at the back called the actors before the curtain over and over again.³ It is rather moving to recall the first obscure performances of this little group, surrounded by a few devoted friends, and to think of the fame the future held in store for them. Dullin, Suzanne Bing, Valentine Tessier, Louis Jouvet were there of course; but there were also Schlumberger, who brought V. Reau (who designed the first costumes), L.-P. Fargue who addressed the envelopes, and R. Martin du Gard who was in charge of the cloakroom. 'And when we went on tour we saw a

¹ *Souvenirs du Vieux Colombier*, pp. 47–8.

² *Ibid.*

³ *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 November, 1949; 'J. Copeau', by P. Varillon.

pair of round spectacles peering at us from the prompter's box below a forehead already gone bald: Georges Duhamel.¹

And then, all of a sudden, in May 1914, came the overwhelming revelation of *Twelfth Night*. Paris was taken by storm and every night there was a battle at the box office to seize a last seat or *strapontin*.

Before two weeks were out [wrote Jean Schlumberger] all the Shakespearians throughout the world were on the alert: they knew that the butterfly had emerged from the chrysalis and was fluttering its wings. Seventeen years later the astonishment of this magical evening was still warm in Copeau's heart. It was the real beginning and birth of the Vieux Colombier. There was only one view: the performance had a beauty, an importance, which might seem fugitive on the surface, but which no one was ever to forget.

It was not only the French critics who admired Copeau's *Twelfth Night*; more than one of their English colleagues shared the general astonishment. The eminent Shakespearian, Harley Granville-Barker, who had himself directed a perfect production of the same play, wrote in *The Observer* after a visit to the Vieux Colombier: 'I am stupefied to discover that the French actors play Shakespeare better than we, generally speaking, play him ourselves.' It is possible that the whole renaissance of the modern theatre dates from this moment in which poetry and beauty met together.

Two months later general mobilization was ordered and war was declared. Copeau's entire work seemed to be destroyed. One can hold an indefinite post-mortem over this blow of fate; imagine what would have happened if . . . , pretend that the future of the Vieux Colombier would have been quite different but for this world-wide convulsion. In one sense that is perfectly true, and Copeau admitted it. But in another sense a conclusion of this sort takes too superficial a view of the workings of the human mind. There seems, on the contrary, to be a close link between the First World War and Copeau's profound vocation; this will become clear in the course of the present study. It is said that, but for the cataclysm of 1914, the Vieux Colombier could have found its equilibrium, grown naturally, succeeded. But the people who argue like this fail to see that the notion of success is wholly incompatible with Copeau's message and that his life, even through the most

¹ *Souvenirs du Vieux Colombier*, p. 27.

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apparently unpredictable events, has never swerved from the same straight line.

However that may be, Copeau was once more thrown back into solitude and silence. He meditated, in the light of the last seven months, on his art, comparing his own discoveries with what he inherited from tradition. It was at this time that he met Adolphe Appia and Gordon Craig.

The study of Molière led me to study the Italian comedy. I saw how farce ought to be played, and in order to set its movements in relief, I brought it back, spiritually speaking, to the stage of its origins. In fact I began to understand what the stage and acting really were: the inspiration they bring to an author soaked in their laws and master of their resources: the close connexion and the natural identity of every theatrical composition with the means given it to express itself in space and time. The problem of invention and the problem of interpretation became associated in my mind: I could no longer separate them, one from another. The actor must understand the workings of the creative mind: the poet must understand the nature of the stage: the work of literature must consent to the architectural style of the theatre: the performance must have a basic unity. These were the first principles, I felt, of any appeal for the fundamental renewal and purification of dramatic forms.¹

Those were fruitful times, but they were not to last. In 1917 the Government appealed to Copeau to reassemble his company and go to New York, where it was hoped that a season of French plays would be of assistance to French propaganda. 'It was a mad idea', for the New York of 1917 was not the New York of today, curious to see Anouilh, Sartre and Giraudoux. What reception could be expected for a 'regular French theatre, playing every night without a star, without luxurious settings, with no bluff, and with only their quality to recommend them'?² But all the same Copeau and his actors, not wishing to disappoint the confidence which had been placed in them, decided to run the risk. Besides, there was always the attraction of the unknown.

We know what a hard fight they had; the resistance put up by the public of Fifth Avenue to the masterpieces of the Vieux Colombier; Mrs. Vanderbilt knitting away in the front row during the performance. There was nothing here that tasted like the Parisian salt, no whiff of the Boulevards or the Palais Royal. But the actors persevered and ended by forcing New York to ack-

¹ Ibid., pp. 76, 77.
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² Ibid., p. 78.

nowledge them; it was conquered, as Paris had been conquered, by the sheer quality of the productions. The victory, however, was won at a price.

The way we worked during these two years of exile simply passes the imagination. I cannot even imagine, looking back now, how we were able to get through it. We put fifty plays on the stage, some of them in five acts, with all their costumes, scenery, furniture and properties. During the first season the tempo was almost tolerable: during the second it was inhuman. Twenty-five productions in twenty-five weeks. Two rehearsals a day. Two matinées a week. A first-night every Monday.¹

If Copeau brought back from this visit 'a stifling harvest of experiences', he added that he narrowly missed leaving his skin behind there.

We must always remember the terrible wear and tear of these two seasons if we are to understand something of his future attitude. In New York, he was once again in exile, not only from France but from the right conditions of creative work for which he felt the nostalgia and the need. As he became engulfed in the whirlpool of this American existence, his solitude deepened and grew.

When he came back in 1919, worn out in body and mind, he felt an immense weariness; he needed a period of recollection and spiritual ripening to regather his strength, take note of his position, and set his compass. The desire for departure was already at work in him. 'Already I should have liked to leave the theatre in order to serve it better.'² He understood the need for a certain interior silence without which action is no more than an empty agitation and an ephemeral parade.

Vain wish: the spirit had to return to the body. The public was waiting for us and calling for us. They talked to me of common sense, reason, duty, and I don't know what. So I repeated at Paris the experience of New York: more brilliantly, but not much more inventively. I did the work with diminished strength and *on ground that I had dreamt for a long time of leaving behind me*. I stood it for five years without any real hope.³

Copeau suffered deeply from this new slavery—a gilded slavery, but a slavery none the less. At the beginning of each season he

¹ Ibid., p. 80.

² Ibid., p. 82.

³ Ibid. Italics mine.

started off refreshed, spiritually happy, with the right desire for creation. And then everything immediately went dead on him, became shabby; he was exhausted by the 'horrible machinery of putting on a play. I took one step forward, and was then forced to take ten back. I did my job, but . . . I no longer created anything new'.¹ He felt that his art was growing mechanical, that it was turning into a mere virtuosity. His life was no longer genuinely creative; he was always starting all over again at the same place. And Copeau aimed at something far higher than the practice of a successful actor. He wanted to do something new and he wanted to do it perfectly. 'For five years I wasted my strength in the sorrow of feeling inside me the things that I had neither the means nor the leisure to accomplish; things that I was not even able to express clearly because, in the theatre, there is no valid expression except by taking a job in hand and finishing it.'² It was not success that he needed to appease and satisfy him. "Success brought me neither refreshment nor relief. I admit that is probably my weakness. I take an inordinate pleasure in work, but I don't willingly give its due importance to success. Perhaps it is a case of pride. But there is a grain of humility mixed up in it, I think. Work is my companion; it lives with me. But I nearly always feel that success is against me; it is a stranger."³ To be sure, Copeau enjoyed the playing of a game and the winning of it, but like Péguy, of whom one cannot help thinking as one reads the following lines, he was never deeply moved in doing so: 'It is nothing in comparison with the worker's reward when he looks at some perfect detail of the work which he has in hand; no one will even notice it, maybe, but his heart has secretly gone into it'.⁴ For Copeau the first necessity was creation, to *make something*; and for that he required solitude. Every creative spirit felt the same need. 'I could live in the cellar and compose, one after another, the productions which would be given on the first floor, without ever coming out of my hole'.⁵

This does not mean to say that Copeau preached 'an ascetic theatre, in a closed vase', reserved for the 'happy few'. Nothing was more foreign to his nature. He knew only too well that his art 'only revealed its strength when it was in contact with a large public and only flourished under what might be called popular forms'.⁶ All his ultimate experiments were undertaken in this sense. But he felt that in the existing state of society the theatre could not

¹ Ibid., p. 83.

⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

² Ibid., pp. 83, 84.

⁵ Ibid.

³ Ibid., pp. 84, 85.

⁶ Ibid., p. 86.

escape compromise. Its situation was abnormal. It was 'incapable of flowering', an 'invalid art', and any effort at correction was no more than the administration of 'provisional drugs',¹ so long as the disease was not attacked at its root. Copeau felt also the imperious necessity of escaping the wheels within wheels of success, and the routine turning out of one production after another, and the disorder of work taken in hand in the spirit of hard labour. He would now embark on his supreme experience; he would seek a haven in the very heart of the whirlpool which was once more engulfing him; he would find a true *retreat* in the dust and heat of the battle. And so it was that in 1920 he founded the school of the Vieux Colombier; he was impelled to this, even more strongly, by that intimate need of solitude and silence which was the torment of his vocation. 'Only the stage makes the actor and only the stage makes the dramatist. But it unmakes them also. It may be a good thing, from time to time, to take them away.'

The founding of the School was primarily a spiritual enterprise, in the strongest sense of the term; it was an attempt at the 'renewal of man in the theatre'.² Copeau wanted to create there habits of life favourable to the actor's art, 'an atmosphere of intellectual, moral and technical formation'. He would have liked to take for his motto the saying, at once so simple and so profound, of Goethe, 'Before you can do, you have to be.' For, he added, 'you can only make what you are'.³ So it was really a matter of re-making more from within; not, however, by an individualist method, but rather by developing in him a sense of community and service. Here Copeau resumed, in effect, one of the fundamental ideas which had inspired the foundation of the Vieux Colombier in 1913; the notion that actors must live in common, if their efforts are not to be degraded by *complacency*. He would formulate it now in dramatic terms, revealing in this way the extraordinary unity of a mission which expressed itself on three different planes—the technical, the poetic, and the spiritual. And the three degrees had a single sense. It was a question, he said, of recovering the idea of the Chorus, in the old meaning of the word. 'A technical preoccupation of a fundamental kind brought us straight back to the source of inspiration; the Chorus is the mother-cell of all dramatic poetry, and it was from poetry that we had gone astray.'

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 96.

³ Ibid., p. 92.

But this would necessitate a whole *education* whose primary importance Copeau emphasized from the beginning. 'At the point where we now stand, I am inclined to think that for the purposes of art, education is a more important factor than vocation. And this is as true for theatrical art as it is for any other.'¹ These words are worth reflecting on, and they assume all their force in the light of the severe criticisms levelled by Copeau against the actors of his time. They are just as true today, and that is why we think it useful to quote at length the following passage from a text which is practically unknown to the general public.

'The theatre has a natural attraction for imbeciles—there is no good denying the fact.' Bécque was applying this to authors, but we wish that he had applied it to actors as well. Everybody wants to become an actor today—the sign of a period where no prohibitions of sanctity defend any more the approaches to the theatre. It is a period without distinction, and all its aspirations, like everything else about it, overflow without degree or discipline. And what is behind these vocations? In nine cases out of ten there is a great deal of spiritual frivolity, idleness and vanity, the taste for easy morals, a remarkable absence of formation, of that minimum of elementary knowledge required for every other art. I have seen enough men and women, self-destined for the theatre, to say that more often than not their vocation is nothing more than a pointer towards the less admirable sides of their natures. And if I learned to distrust this sort of vocation, instead of taking it for a guide, it was because I saw in it, beyond anything else, the first fruits of vices and deformations which made the theatre the most reviled of all professions. For the theatre falls to the lowest depths unless a certain virtue, and even a little sublimity, raises it up.²

Reacting in the same way as the Duse who said that 'actors ought to be killed, because they make art impossible', or like Gordon Craig who wanted to replace them by marionettes, Copeau would try 'to educate them out of a too narrow specialization, broaden their culture and their intelligence, open out for them wider horizons. Only a general culture will give them back the lofty human qualities and the dignity which belongs to the name of artist'.³ But, even more, he wanted them to learn to look upon their art 'not as an easy game, as a brilliant and profitable profession, but as an ideal which can only be reached by a high degree of self-abnegation, by work which is hard, complex, bitter

¹ *L'Ecole du Vieux Colombier*, brochure, p. 3.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

and frequently ungrateful—work which is not only performed with the lips, nor only with the lips and with the mind, but with the body as well and with the heart, with all the faculties, the whole person, the total being.¹ Hence came the need for a true interior transformation, an intimate renewal. ‘It is to the essential self of the actor that we must address ourselves; it is his soul that we have to form, irrespective of the work in hand.’² For one can only give what one has, or, better still, what one is. Let us keep in mind the saying of Goethe that Copeau wanted to take as motto. Later, he would say to Chancerel. ‘We should need to be saints.’

And so it was a whole climate of spiritual nobility which would surround the actor, sustain him from within, and illuminate his vocation. This is the place to quote the splendid words in which Copeau defined his conception of the theatre and the actor’s part in it. It is good to re-read these marble sentences which resist the sands of time; today as yesterday, they will serve as landmarks, lofty and exacting, amid the chaos in which we live.

What we are looking for will emerge from our own knowledge. We know that what we do depends on what we are, that lovely forms are born from lovely thoughts. We know that what we are depends on what we believe and to a considerable degree on what we admire. We shall try to make of our pupils men and women who are properly brought up. We shall try, first of all, to preserve them from ugliness, futility and deceit, and then to educate them in the sense of what is true and great and beautiful. The words simplicity, abnegation, discipline, which for so many others are words and nothing more, will be for us realities. We shall so form the taste of our students that all beauty will speak to them a language they will naturally understand, and all ugliness appear to them self-evidently absurd. We shall teach them the meaning of work as the workman knows it, the daily inescapable toil. And we shall teach them to work as a means of service, not as a means of self-satisfaction.³

It is clear what immense consequences a spiritual attitude of this kind would have upon the actor’s formation. It is clear how it would lead Copeau to turn, more and more, towards the young. He said so in so many words. ‘We shall exert all our effort on the youngest,’⁴ for only the child would be sufficiently supple, sufficiently unmarked, to receive this formation, to enter into a game which demanded a total surrender.

¹ Ibid., pp. 5, 6.

² Ibid., p. 11.

³ Ibid., p. 15.

⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

Thus it was that the school came to occupy an increasingly important place in the mind and heart of Copeau. It was there that he gladly took refuge to escape the destructive whirlpool of his life and the exhaustive demands of public fashion. It was there that he found something of the silence he thirsted for, the proper conditions of creative work; there that he discovered 'in the freshness and the movement of life the foretaste of a new art'.¹ But the beginnings of the school were very modest; some people would even call them miserable and complain that they had very little connexion with the immense programme laid down by Copeau in his second Manifesto. There was only a limited staff, led magnificently by Suzanne Bing, and there was nothing in their slow, obscure and molecular labours to strike the imagination. This was responsible for the hostility which began to gather round the school. Copeau's company could not understand 'what chimeras I was pursuing outside and what satisfaction I derived from these still formless experiments. My actors felt themselves abandoned'.² And he himself in the welter of daily obligations had not the time to stop and explain. 'I had quite enough to do explaining myself to myself; I had neither the time nor the taste nor the necessary lucidity to explain myself to other people'.³ Carried away by his enthusiasm, in the throes of his creative effort, torn in two opposite directions, and completely at one with his work, he was unable to disengage himself sufficiently to reveal its living architecture to his companions and trace for them its interior perspectives. He was hoping for a spontaneous adhesion, an unconditional enthusiasm, a faith. 'I was asking for an act of faith; and I failed to get it precisely because everyone thought that in seeking a new point of departure, I had gone back to talking nonsense'.⁴ Here, once again, Copeau found himself alone. He had, in truth, never been anything else but alone, in spite of the admiration and affection with which his colleagues surrounded him. Many years afterwards Valentine Tessier spoke of this solitude. 'There was always a distance between him and us, and this corresponded perhaps to a distance, which he lucidly measured, between the rôle he had assumed and the fear he felt of never attaining his ideal'.⁵

In spite of the promise shown, nevertheless, in these first experiments, and notably in the Japanese *No* play which astonished Granville Barker at its dress rehearsal, but which was unfortu-

¹ *Souvenirs du Vieux Colombier*, p. 98.

² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁵ *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 8 August, 1949.

nately never performed on account of an accident suffered by the principal actor at the last moment; in spite of Stanislavsky's encouragements, when he was passing through Paris, and of Adolphe Appia who wrote to Copeau from Switzerland, '*Vos petits sont tout mon espoir*', this new departure met with nothing but suspicion, hostility, or indifference on every side. The indifference was not shared by the founder of the Vieux Colombier, who saw in his school 'a truer and more original spring of creation',¹ and who expected the entire theatre to be irrigated by it. This kind of failure, at the height of his fatigue, put the seal on Copeau's discouragement.

The reader will already have perceived that we have entered here upon that '*histoire profonde*', of which Copeau himself was one day to speak; this alone can throw some light on the reasons, at once so simple and so complex, which led to the famous *retreat* of 1924. The problem of the School brought out into the light of day the drama in which Copeau had been engaged for a long time past. Two roads were open to him; the choice was blinding in its clarity. He could persevere in an effort of experiment, of new and original creation; he could deepen and broaden the existing conditions of the theatre; and in this case he could find the recollection and silence necessary for the ripening of a few great productions. Or he could accept the routine of producing plays at any price; he could agree to put them on without adequate preparation; he could become the slave of this or that impresario; he could bow to public taste and passing fashion; and once a success had been achieved, he would have to admit the implacable necessity of producing more and more plays in order to sustain it. This was to work in conditions which, for Copeau, were impossible. The theatre would become a profession like any other; it would no longer be the prodigious search for an artistic absolute which was haunting him.

Finding himself at this cross-roads, he could not hesitate; but the choice was a very painful one.² In choosing the first alternative, he could measure how great a wrench it would involve, but he could not tell how far he would go towards the realization of his ideal. However, being the man he was, he could not decide otherwise. It has been said that his decision was inspired by financial difficulties, but this is not true. Let it not be supposed, however, that these difficulties were imaginary; in spite of the crowded

¹ *Souvenirs du Vieux Colombier*, p. 101.

² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

houses every night and the immense reputation of his theatre throughout Europe, they were very real.

If it had only been a question of raising money to maintain the *Vieux Colombier*, it would have been relatively easy to curtail certain expenses and to find fresh support. Several months before we closed, in order not to risk disappointment, I had not spent more than an hour in trying to find the necessary capital: and then a new group offered me a considerable subsidy on the sole condition that I would transfer the whole enterprise to a theatre where we could take more money.¹

No, the choice was dictated by a number of psychological reasons, by certain human feelings, and by the physical and moral reactions resulting from the really terrible strain of the past ten years. Pierre Bost tells us that he 'had carried his burden single-handed and it had crushed him'. We must realize his state of nervous exhaustion, his disappointment at not being able to develop his work in the way he wanted, his disgust at the flattery of snobs. This wounded him when all he could feel was the piercing awareness of what he had yet to accomplish, the gap between his ambition and his achievement. We must add to this his bitterness at the failure of his school, a bitterness not unmixed with anger. There was a misanthropic and disagreeable side to Copeau's character, which was the counterpart to his prophetic vision. He suffered from this state of inward exasperation in which he now continually lived, and he admitted, later, that it had coloured his decision. There is a touching loyalty in these words from the precious lecture he gave on 1 January, 1931. It is an indispensable passage:

Conscious of my own knowledge, I revolted against injustice. Conscious of my failing, I had learned too much to listen without impatience to people calling me a master where I only knew enough to be an apprentice . . . a mixture of fatigue, anxiety, despair, and illumination . . . a wasting away of my strength through insomnia and a total absence of domestic order . . . a frenzied attachment to ideas and things and habits which the people around me didn't think as important as I did, while the passion with which I clung to them perhaps made me look ridiculous in their eyes . . . and that anger, always grumbling away inside me . . . I was no longer lovable. Nobody could be expected to like me any more, and people blamed me because they were not able to. They would say to me,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

'If you are alone it's because you have wanted to be alone.' I had silenced all criticism and all advice, and unfortunately this silence upset everyone around me . . . disappointed affection . . . wounded pride . . . the intoxication of an effort so strained that it was no longer interested in anything but itself, bringing back everything to itself, wanting to bind everything to its own dictation; I don't envy anyone this kind of deviation of faculties fine in themselves.¹

There is a grandeur only too rare in this confession; but we must go deeper if we want to discover the secret of Jacques Copeau's whole life. This really brings us to the heart of our subject, and it is time to recall the phrase which we set under the title of this essay, '*L'insatisfaction m'habitait*'. That is the key, not only to the drama of the *Vieux Colombier* but to the entire existence of Jacques Copeau; that is the phrase which most completely defines him and illuminates his slightest actions.

I am a man who devours his days and nights in doing a job which is not really intended for him. None of the things for which I get praised satisfy me, because nothing that I have so far accomplished counts for me any longer and because the only thing that matters is the work which allows one to grope towards perfection. Everything else is vain repetition. I am asked to be content with exploiting what I have achieved, to rest on my laurels and turn them to financial account.

This was how he confided in Pierre Varillon about this time,² but he wrote to Antoine, 'If what I have done is worth anything, it is nothing compared to what I should like to do.'³ And he confessed to Suzanne Bing before leaving, 'I am not interested in doing one more successful production.' Those flaming words—*L'insatisfaction m'habitait*—must be understood as the expression of a thirst for the Absolute which nothing had ever been able to quench, least of all the agitation and fatigue of a life crowned with temporal honours. He felt a vocation deep inside him, a need to lift the dead weight that was crushing him (was it the dead weight of his century or of his own heart?); to be free from the slavery of work which was destitute of grandeur also; to escape from the din, from the terrifying whirlpool which had tossed him about for ten years; to discover himself at last and the springs of his being. This was an appeal to a life of authentic creation and there was already

¹ Ibid., p. 105.

² *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 November, 1949.

³ Open Letter to Antoine in *Le Journal*, 8 May, 1924.

mingled with it a more spiritual, a more secret and intimate appeal, which had never ceased to call him (as he now forcibly reminds us) since he stood upon the threshold of his youth. It called him, like a lover, to a life of interior solitude.

My aspirations fell to the ground: my intuitions remained unverified: I heard the call strongly at one time and feebly at another: I was only beginning to possess myself of the truth. And this was true on the intellectual and professional planes, no less than on the intimate and spiritual. Something heavy, like a mountain, weighed on my development. I would have broken with a great deal else besides in order to find myself. I left my theatre as I had left my family at the age of twenty. I left it as a man leaves the woman he loves in answer to a call more urgent than the call of love, only I did not as yet know its name.¹

We begin to see now the striking unity of this life, its uninterrupted search for the Absolute. We can see how Copeau's mysterious 'retreat' was already implicit in many of his former attitudes. There was no failure here, and no reason for regret. Copeau could never have become a successful actor, a grand established figure, any more than Péguy could have been elected to the Académie Française or have been received by the Pope. (And yet one thinks of the splendid poems Péguy might have written if he had not been killed in action; of those five or six 'Mysteries', and that 'Paradiso', rivalling Dante's own, that he was already meditating. But Péguy was one of those who fall by the wayside, stricken with the tools in his hand.) Similarly Copeau would not have been Copeau if he had not gone away, for it was his vocation to be a prophet and not an exploiter, to conquer the land, not to parcel it out. Once the cry had escaped him, he could only continue his irresistible march towards the desert. Truly a pilgrim of the Absolute.

'So I left without knowing where I should go. I cruised around the roads of Burgundy in an old Ford. It was raining. On my knees I had the rule of St. Benedict.'² He was still full of hope and plans and ambition and desires, and he brought along with him a whole group of enthusiastic young people, all ready for the most novel experiences and expecting miracles from him. Instead of his search for change of scene, solitude, absolute rest, and complete

¹ *Souvenirs du Vieux Colombier*, pp. 103-104.

² *Ibid.*, p. 106.

renewal, he found himself encumbered with a new company. 'In place of a good nursing home I was landed with the direction of an abbey without benefice or provision, without an abbot and without God. When I saw all those faces upturned to me, for the first time I began to tremble.'¹ Copeau had not yet reached the extremity of his loneliness and his ordeal; it was only now that he was to experience their full force, opening for him the avenues of grace.

To begin with, the money which had been promised me for this new establishment failed to materialize. In order to feed everybody, we should have to harness ourselves to a fresh exploitation without either a repertory of plays or the capital with which to perform them. There was a perfect silence whichever way we turned: we were forgotten. Various troubles afflicted us, several of the company went sick. I was filled with disgust and nausea—it was like a great lump of cinders asking to be digested. Anyway, my heart was no longer in the enterprise, my heart was wounded. All pride was now gone: on the contrary, what I had lost was the faculty of loving the thing I had created, of believing in myself and of trusting other people. This was the moment when my youth left me.²

Everything now combined, most cruelly, to fill the cup of Copeau's bitterness to the brim. The great man, already wounded, stooped under the burden and fell to the ground. His heart was ravaged and his soul had lost its anchor. It was crushed. His loneliness had reached the limit of absolute deprivation, and he even knew the humiliation of those evil passions which sear the heart to its roots. 'The difficult age for a man was getting me down and I fell victim, once again, to the passions of the world from which I was beginning to detach myself. I was thirsty for silence and the interior life.'³ The Pilgrim of the Absolute had indeed arrived at that supreme point of poverty without which there is no true rebirth.

'Thirsty for silence and the interior life,' yes, Copeau was like a stag pursued by the hounds (here it was the Hound of Heaven); he was out of breath, eager for rest and thirsty for the living waters. It was at the depth of this abyss of distress that Grace came to seek him out; it was here that the peace of an unchangeable Love filled at last, and filled for ever, the heart which, up till then, had known no satisfaction. When exactly did this conversion take place, and in what precise circumstances? Here, once again,

¹ Ibid., p. 7.

² Ibid., p. 108.

³ Ibid.

Copeau's vocation to solitude hides from us the instant of illumination. Not even those nearest to him could recall the day and hour of this capital event. Only Father G., his Benedictine friend, now in Rome, could lift the veil. We can only say that it happened during the winter of 1925-26, and it seems to have become officially known after the death of Jacques Rivière. When one studies this life, it appears eminently suitable, and all in a line with the destiny of Copeau, that no other detail should be given us of so decisive an act. It is not for us to disturb the silence of the Encounter; that is the King's secret.

But we can at least admire the way in which this conversion came to be integrated with the continuous development of a life which had never ceased to move towards the light. No trial, hesitation or recovery had deflected it. We have seen how the call to solitude, the desire for purity and spiritual poverty had echoed in it from the beginning. '*L'insatisfaction m'habitait*'—the formula was just as valid for the art of Jacques Copeau as it was for his deep interior life. It defined his quest for *another theatre*, which should correspond with his discovery of the *sacré*; the stern demands he made upon himself, which were to lead him to God. He had always been a fugitive of the vanguard; he had always run that magnificent course which the complacent mistake for an evasion of reality, or, even worse, for a cowardly retreat. It is, in fact, the spurring onwards of a soul towards the only horizon capable of fulfilling its desire. We are reminded of Agatha's speech before the departure of Harry at the end of Eliot's *Family Reunion*:

In a world of fugitives
The person taking the opposite direction
Will appear to run away.

No, Copeau's departure was not a betrayal. He went away in obedience to the murmur of the Spirit; faithful to the Creation which begs us, without ceasing, to bear it beyond itself, full of a burning tenderness for things and creatures whose fragile splendour is so terribly threatened with corruption. His soul opened and turned towards its sun, choosing the dawn.

I must follow the bright angels.

This is the moment to point out two religious influences which grew from now onwards in the life of Copeau, until it became

polarized between them. These influences were St. Benedict and St. Francis of Assisi. St. Benedict counted for a great deal in his conversion. Solesmes had always been a refuge and a retreat for him, and it was apparently during the celebration of the Offices there that he received the illumination of Grace. The stage director in him was struck by a perfection that he had never been able to attain himself. He admitted, in fact, to one of his close friends about this time how overcome he had been by the revelation of the spacious Benedictine Liturgy. There appeared to him in this way, and on a plane which was no longer purely of this world, that *total celebration* of which he had always dreamt.

The Franciscan spirituality was later to capture him entirely, but it is worth mentioning here the visit he made to Assisi with Father G., just after his conversion. He returned radiant, for he had passed through the fire of a fearful ordeal to meet, at last, the ineffable countenance of Joy.

Copeau installed himself at Pernand-Vergelesse on the Côte d'Or, in Burgundy, and gradually recovered his equilibrium and serenity. Purified by the Presence that dwelt in him and attuned to the broad rhythms of nature, his soul expanded anew to the promises of the future and to the goodness of creation. With an enthusiastic little group at his side, he set to work, getting right down to fundamentals, forcing himself, slowly, towards the construction of a popular theatre, healthy, true, rooted in reality, bathed in the poetry of human life, instinct with simplicity and grandeur. It was the adventure of the *Copiaus*. (This was the cry spontaneously let out by the children in the villages and the fields when the company went past in their big char-à-banc. 'The *Copiaus*, the *Copiaus*, there are the *Copiaus*!')

At the same time that we studied and practised, we started to act again. This was how we first gave *Le Médecin malgré Lui* and *L'Ecole des Maris* before immense popular audiences in the large and the little Burgundian villages. And this was how, every year, we organized the Wine Festivals at Beaune and Nuits St. Georges. In the covered market-places we played to between two and three thousand people, celebrating our own *cru*, and celebrating at the same time life and wine and the vintner's toil.¹

One feels that Copeau was happy in this setting, that he had rediscovered the springs of an authentic art and of a true beauty.

¹ *Nouvelles Littéraires*, 19 February, 1927.

We must turn to the *Souvenirs* for Copeau's description of these Festivals, of their animation and exultant high spirits.

Our performances were virtually improvised and they were in tune with the time and place and public. They were healthy, vigorous, and almost completely free of the theatrical dust. Boldly, though tentatively, poorly though sincerely, they sketched out freer dramatic forms: they looked forward to a theatre into which we should have admitted the fresh air. Often they achieved, *naturally*, that public assent, those moments of perfect communion between the actors and the audience which are the crown of theatrical entertainment, and which so many aesthetes and theorists try to secure by sophisticated methods.

(This is how Jean Dasté and his actors are working today, with a splendid faith and disinterestedness. They show themselves in a direct line of descent from the *patron*.)

But however new and fecund these experiments may have been, they could no longer satisfy Copeau. He had gone too far; he had opened his soul and mind to a more powerful inspiration. He could not help wanting an even wider horizon for his art. In 1933 he was called to Florence to produce in the open air a fourteenth-century mystery play, *Sant' Uliva*, with choir and music. It was a performance on the grand scale, almost consonant with his dreams. Here was a combination of circumstances—the open air, the setting, the social and religious character of the performance, its collective effort and sacral significance—which seemed to promise the best conditions for a true dramatic celebration—the prelude of a new theatrical art. On his return, he said to Suzanne Bing, 'I don't see myself working any longer between three walls.' This remark shows very clearly his state of mind at the time and lights up for us the whole path he had travelled. Ten years afterwards, during the war, he repeated the experiment at Beaune. It took the form of a dramatic and religious celebration of the same type, *Le Pain Doré*, taken from an old anonymous text, with music by Joseph Samson, and played before a very large popular audience. It is significant that Copeau himself regarded *Le Pain Doré* and *Sant' Uliva* as his two best productions.

This shows us in what direction he felt himself to be drawn throughout this long period; it reveals the orientation of his work and study. He detached himself increasingly from the past, from the traditional forms of the theatre—discouraging a little, perhaps, the young people around him. But his heart and spirit were else-

where. He was aspiring to *something else*. That is, at bottom, the reason why he always came back to the solitude of Pernand, in spite of an occasional short visit to Paris. He was haunted for a long time by the desire to find a new scenic structure for a modern Christian theatre. He was thinking of something absolutely different in shape, in tune with the *ample cérémonie du monde*. He realized that this ambition, if not impossible, was at least quite impracticable under present conditions. But it was in no way Utopian. It only expressed his personal vocation to draw the outline of a theatre which should have the character of absolute art, and be the highest symbol, perhaps, of another Celebration, a truly sacred Celebration, uniting heaven and earth in a more than human accord. Copeau set up this high ideal as a beacon-light on his horizon, hoping meanwhile to purify and gradually transform the lower forms of theatrical expression.

'Do you see where the new movement you are creating is leading you?' asked André Lang.

'Not very clearly as yet,' replied Copeau. 'I'm still finding out. All I know and all I am sure of is this. The thing that will triumph tomorrow, when we have got over this tiresome period of fumbling and foot-slogging, may continue to call itself a *theatre*, but it will no longer bear any resemblance to what we look upon as a theatre today. It will be very far from the sort of art which is fashionable just now in the theatre of the *avant garde* and in which, as I have said to you before, I have no sort of faith.'

Moved by his sincerity, Lang then remarked to him: 'Perhaps you have come too soon. Perhaps you belong to a theatre which does not exist.'

Copeau paused and then replied gently, 'Perhaps.'¹

In any case, the further he advanced the more he felt the need to give the Theatre an absolute foundation. 'If, over the last two hundred years, the art of the theatre has lost its splendour and become so petty and insignificant, it is because the notions of good and evil, of justice and injustice, of merit and demerit have disappeared; and with them has disappeared the distinction between man and God.'² And he told the young men and women of our own time: 'You see, my friends, the thing that matters above everything, the only thing that matters at all, in the midst of such confusion, is for you to make a pact with your own souls and

¹ André Lang, *Comoedia*, 23 November, 1926.

² André Lang in *Cassandra*, 20 January, 1940.

loyally abide by it. Each one of you, in the secret places of your soul, must be a hero.¹ That was the lesson of his whole life; spiritual grandeur is the only basis for true art.

And so, while his pupils and disciples in Paris were transforming the French theatre, the old master buried himself deeper and deeper in the silence of his retreat. Each day he detached himself more completely from the intellectuals and the *littérateurs*, and drew closer to the peasants and the simple folk around him. Two great presences guided his steps and stood luminous at his side—St. Benedict and St. Francis. In St. Benedict the sacred climate which he so ardently desired to see introduced into the Theatre was transposed on to the spiritual plane of the Liturgy. Several details of the Rule—which we saw on his knees, the day of the terrible departure—were to attract him; the love of youth and the attitude of respect for the smallest objects of creation, all the careful prescriptions of the Liturgy which seemed anything but futile to the former Master of Ceremonies on the stage, and finally the feeling for the majesty of God's presence in all places and at all times. Here Copeau found confirmed all his native reverence for the sacred. Even the severe counsel of chapter xlvi must have pleased this exacting reader. 'Let none have the presumption to sing or to read, except he who can discharge this office to the edification of his hearers; this must be done with humility and gravity and fear, and only by him whom the Abbot has appointed.' What he found in Benedictine spirituality was a certain mixture of tenderness and rigour, of spiritual pleasure and spiritual poverty; a kind of heavenly agreement and ineffable harmony between God and man which was to touch, deeply, his musician's soul.

The influence of St. Francis was even more profound. 'Because he is poor, because he is simple.' Suarés was already saying this about Copeau in 1922 (e.g. *Comoedia*, 12 September, 1922), revealing a whole aspect of his character, which is often passed over in silence. This love of poverty which was in him, and which drew him to the Poverello, was already evident in the technical studies of his early career, and in the final cry of his Manifesto in 1913. 'All we need for the new work we have in hand is a bare stage.' Indeed, this man's life was all of a piece.

His simplicity and his kindness—also Franciscan qualities—have been equally misunderstood; and this was partly, perhaps,

¹ André Lang in *Comoedia*, 27 May, 1944.

his own fault. He concealed them under a forbidding mask. Let us take a step backward and trace this last sketch, relating the past to the present.

They are rehearsing . . . Copeau goes to the back of the theatre, listens in silence, with no sign of nervousness. Now and again he says something which suddenly gives true significance to a speech, jumps on to the stage, murmurs a suggestion or two, punctuated by a tap on the shoulder or some friendly gesture. When his own turn comes to play, he is as modest as the merest beginner, interrupting himself to exclaim genially 'Not easy to say, that sentence.'¹

He was as simple among the folk in his own village as he was on the boards of his theatre. When Copeau died, the Mayor, son of the postmistress of Pernand, was astonished to see telegrams arriving from all over the world. It had never occurred to him that Copeau was such a famous man.

The grace of the *Poverello* finally appeared in his love of children. This was especially marked during his last days, when the neighbours' children would come in at all hours of the day and climb on to his knees without worrying him in the least. All this side of his character was crystallized in the very beautiful play which he wrote, over a period of many years, on the subject of St. Francis of Assisi. It was dedicated to Mother François, his beloved child, who is a Benedictine missionary in Madagascar.

And so the solitude and peace grew in his heart. The wonderful reader who knew how to ravish with admiration all the cities of Europe only now read aloud the Gospel, every Sunday, in his parish church. Some of his old friends who came to see him were aware of the light radiating from his retreat. 'You felt you were in the house of a man who had given himself passionately to a work without letting himself become engulfed in it—a man whose moral life developed on a broader plane.'² Right up to the end this man, who was accused of being a Jansenist—one who liked to put out the lights—displayed a wonderful humanity, like the St. Francis he loved so dearly.

Now when we risk not being recognized unless we wear a label on our hats, let us choose our watchword. It shall be *life first*: life—long and patient, active and occupied and difficult: life intoxicated with the joy of our humanity.³

¹ J. Delpech in *Marianne*, 10 October, 1934.

² Jean Schlumberger, *Figaro Littéraire*, 6 November, 1949.

³ Letter to a friend shortly before his death.

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But Jacques Copeau was drawing near to the estuary. One of those who were closest to him describes how, towards the end, he would remain silent for long moments together. He had become very gentle and very kind. He now expressed himself with difficulty, but a light would sometimes come into his face. Then his lips would settle again and he would say nothing.

He died with a perfect simplicity and his friends among the peasantry carried him to his grave. It was a fitting end to a life which had been so lonely.

'The greatest man of the French theatre since Molière,' said Pierre Varillon in speaking of Jacques Copeau.¹ In a sense it was true; there was more than one element in his character and genius which brought together the modern reformer and the comic of the sixteenth century. There was the same direct, sturdy, popular conception of the theatre, the same power of theatrical invention which enabled him to act, to write and to direct, the same profound melancholy, the same loneliness. One is reminded of Péguy's beautiful phrase about Molière's comedy, 'a serious comedy, and all the more profound because it rested on an invincible melancholy'. But it would seem that Copeau's place is more special; that it is, in fact, unique. For one can always object that the founder of the Vieux Colombier was neither a very great actor—he had too much responsibility to give himself entirely to acting, nor a very great dramatist—he has left us few plays and none of them fulfil his own conception of what they should be. And one cannot deny that he was only really active as a director over a period of ten years.

And yet his immense stature dominates the whole theatre of our time. His vocation was truly of a spiritual order. He gave back to the theatre its high dignity of celebration, and he discovered for the actor the human dimension of his calling, opening his heart and his intelligence to all the winds of the spirit. He taught him the love of effort and sacrifice, the joy of creation and the offering of work, the respect for beauty and the sense of greatness. In order to purify his gesture and give nobility to his expression, Copeau brought him back to the deep source of his being. He showed that the art of the theatre could only be based on an absolute Order; otherwise it would be degraded, until it became nothing more than the most hideous prostitution. By recovering the 'Chorus', he freed the actor from complacency, and by introducing poetry,

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 November, 1949, p. 291.

which is the instrument by which men of one mind express their communion, he prepared the people for a Ceremony which should be truly sacred. Finally, he made us realize that man had no right to create an imaginary space and play before his fellows unless he agreed first to forget his own face and to let appear in place of it, in its primal nakedness, the shining or the humiliated features of a god. 'We have to be Saints.'

This is the most profound message left to us by Jacques Copeau. The entire history of the Theatre hardly shows another worthy to be set beside it.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PROBLEM OF FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

Le Catholicisme dans l'œuvre de François Mauriac, par Robert J. North ; précédé de *Réflexions sur l'état présent de la littérature catholique*, par Gaëtan Bernoville. Editions du Conquistador, Paris.

In the *New Yorker* of 14 April, 1951, there was a picture of a sinister old grandmother telling a bedtime story to a little girl, and the caption gave the end of the story: 'Then the dragon gobbled up the handsome young prince and his lovely bride and lived happily ever after.' There is no denying that we live in a macabre and lugubrious world; and it is not surprising if novelists, who make that world their setting, are macabre and lugubrious in their turn. But for the Catholic novelist this immediately poses a problem: a particularization of the age-old problem of the relation between art and prudence. Latterly it has been discussed at length, with special reference to M. François Mauriac, by M. Robert J. North, and by M. Gaëtan Bernoville who contributes a long introduction to his book. The latter quotes a passage from M. Julien Green which states the problem in its extreme form:

The true novelist does not dominate his novel, he becomes it, he is immersed in it. Between him and his characters there exists a deeper complicity even than he imagines: and if they sin, he in a way sins too. . . . This being the case—and to my mind there is no shadow of doubt of it—I would ask whether the fact of writing a novel is compatible with the state of grace . . . One cannot write when one lives in perpetual fear of sinning by the very fact of writing. (p. xviii.)

This might well, at first sight, seem an unnecessarily gloomy view; but it is not a new one, and it has vexed Mauriac, in particular, for many years. It was discussed by Maritain in the 1927 edition of *Art et Scholastique*; and by Mauriac, dissatisfied with Maritain's solution, in *God and Mammon*. In Maritain's view, the problem is usually wrongly stated:

The essential problem is not to know whether a novelist may or may not depict this or that aspect of evil, but to know at what altitude he is when he makes his picture, and whether his art and his soul are pure enough and strong enough to make it without conniving with it.

'But,' replies Mauriac, 'it is a condition of art that the novelist should connive with the subject of his creation, in spite of Maritain's warning, for the real novelist is not an observer, but a creator of fictitious life. . . . He brings living people into the world; he does not observe them from some lofty vantage point.'¹ The true novelist does not dominate his novel; in a sense he does not create it: his characters take command. But his characters are himself; aspects of his own personality, or, as Mauriac himself remarks, expressions of his unconscious self; and how then can he escape connivance?

It is surely not true to go on with Mauriac to argue that 'if a novelist keeps the superhuman virtues that Maritain would have him keep, he could never write about evil people': the effect of the writer's personality, his state of soul, his unconscious, is surely more subtle than that. Two writers might describe the same sin, perhaps in equal detail, and yet in the one you would feel the sly grin of connivance and not in the other. There are more ways than one of identifying oneself with evil. There is the way of morose connivance; but there is also the way of redemptive charity, the way of the saint. When Maritain remarks that to do the work of a Proust as it should be done would demand the interior light of an Augustine, he is implying, not that an Augustine would portray less, but that he would portray much more because his vision would penetrate much more deeply.

But the problem remains. If you are neither a saint nor, at the other extreme, deliberately setting out to do evil, but just an ordinary human being, what are you to do? If you deal with the real world, and therefore with evil, can you escape either sinning yourself or leading others into sin? And if not, must you, like Racine, abandon your art altogether?

Shrewdly enough Mauriac remarks in *God and Mammon*: 'People of my calibre complicate the "drama of the Catholic novelist". The humblest priest would tell me, like Maritain; "Be pure, become pure, and your work too will have a reflection in heaven. Begin by purifying the source and those who drink of the water cannot be sick."' As far as the novelist's own personal life is concerned, the theologian would surely agree with M. Bernoville: '*C'est une loi chrétienne que de bien faire son métier*': fulfil the vocation that God has given you and write as well as you can, and as truthfully as you can; try to be a saint so as to do it perfectly; but in the meantime, remember the principle of double

¹ *God and Mammon*, p. 76.

effect: concern yourself with the job in hand, as a job, and if it in fact lands you, incidentally, in difficulties, cope with them as best you can on the spot, and don't worry.

But what of the other problem: the harm that may be done to the reader? Here again a certain robust good sense is needed. Ethics is not an exact science: if every artist waited for an absolute guarantee that his work would have ill effects on nobody, nothing would ever be done. Nor must he exaggerate his own share of responsibility. Here Mauriac himself puts the matter succinctly: 'An author is neither moral nor immoral in himself. It is our own attitude of mind that decides what his influence on us is to be.'¹ If the first sentence is not perhaps quite accurate, the second one holds the core of the matter. Incitement to sin is, like modesty, a relative term. And a reader who is of age to be responsible must choose for himself what he shall read; with the young, the responsibility rests with parents, guardians, educators. (Is it not indeed one of the main tasks of education to prepare the mind, the personality, to be able to judge for itself, to be discriminating and critical, to be able to cope with adventitious impressions?) And if, as is no doubt true, even the most prudent reader may come across something which is harmful for him, still you can only take things by and large: ethics is not an exact science: though there are accidental evil effects by the way they do not outweigh the good to mankind as a whole, the good done by the creation of art, which gives to man that *douloureuse finesse dont on ne voudrait pas ne pas souffrir* which we call culture and which makes the soul worth saving.

Are we to admire Racine for sacrificing his art (unless indeed we believe with M. North that he had merely *épuisé sa veine*, come to the end of his inspiration?) We can admire him for his fortitude, without approving of his judgement. If all the artists had downed tools for fear of doing harm with them, the world would be in a sorry state.

But ought the artist to choose his subject matter more carefully, even so: ought the novelist to avoid portraying evil? Mauriac's answer is definite. 'Where is the artist,' he writes, 'who may dare to imagine the processes and shifts of the great protagonist—Grace? It is the mark of our slavery and of our wretchedness that we can, without lying, paint a faithful portrait only of the passions.'² We are here at the heart of Mauriac's own problem, a problem which M. North does much to clarify for us. Let us leave aside for the moment the question of whether Mauriac is right in this contention. Granting that he is justified in painting the world he does paint, are his critics justified in accusing him of imparting an un-Catholic lesson to his readers?

First of all, it is surely not sufficient to argue, simply, with M. Bernoville, that the novelist is not a teacher, important though such a

¹ *A Woman of the Pharisees*, p. 196.

² *The Enemy*, p. 279.

reminder may be in these days. It is true that to take his language as the formal language of theology is just as misleading as it is to read the mystics as though they used the formal language of theology. But though it is not the office of the novelist to teach, the fact remains that he does imply and inculcate a point of view; he does affect the minds of his readers—we are never the same after we have read Dostoevsky or *Ulysses*—and in these days in particular, novelists do present a picture of sin and sinners which implies a theology. Is that theology true?

M. Bernoville quotes a comment by the Bishop of Troyes, Mgr. Le Couédic, on Mauriac's preface to *The Power and the Glory*. Mauriac had written: 'As he approaches his end, we see this mediocre sinner slowly conforming himself to Christ till he comes to resemble him—or rather, for this is not strong enough—to identify himself with his Lord and God.' The Bishop regards it as a blasphemy to identify this sinner, who got drunk on the eve of his death and who previously had found it impossible to resist this and other vices, with Christ and the saints. But is there not here a confusion of terms? To become identified with means to become one with, not to be equal in all respects to. And we are here at the heart of the theology of weakness—which perhaps only sinners and saints can understand? Can the sinner become united with Christ and still, through weakness, go on sinning even to the end? It is surely untrue to say that in this sinful priest 'it is not virtue which contrasts with sin, but faith': a view which leads Mgr. Le Couédic to speak of the novel as of Lutheran inspiration . . . The contrast is between moral weakness on the one hand and *charity*, the love of God, on the other. What this and other novels (you think of Sebastian at the end of *Brides-head*) make clear to us is that a man can love God enough to sacrifice his life while still remaining incapable, through weakness, of avoiding this or that sin. If the priest does give his life in the end, even in this undignified, hopeless, rather passive sort of way, it proves not faith merely but love; and if he has to screw himself up to the ordeal, if he has to get drunk to go through with it, still it leaves the essential fact unchanged.

Here, then, is a case in which inevitably a novelist does in fact teach; not didactically indeed, but by embodying a psychological insight. Because he is not writing theology his picture may mislead: we may be tempted to a *pecca fortiter*, to a complacent feeling that we need not bother too much about our own sin, forgetting that weakness is only compatible with a growth in love so long as it is hated and resisted; we may have to be reminded of the danger of a *pharisaisme du publicain*; but the fact remains that we can thus gain an insight into sin and love, into sin and mercy, which we might otherwise have missed.

But it is precisely this emergence out of sin into glory which Mauriac's critics find absent in his own works; and we thus return to

his own statement, that the novelist *cannot* portray the workings of grace.

It cannot be denied that Mauriac's world is a doleful enough place; and M. North's account of his background and upbringing helps us to understand why. Mauriac himself speaks of his 'instinctive Jansenism'; and *God and Mammon* ends with a significant paragraph:

‘Who was it who dared to say that Christianity played no part in the flesh?’ he asked me. I was ashamed to remind him that it was myself, and could only hang my head.

And it is tempting to think that one can isolate and identify the element in Mauriac's view of love which prevents him from painting the Christian picture in its fullness.

For Mauriac there seem to be no ‘happy loves’. It is not difficult to see why. He is very concerned with the ‘animality’ of human love; with the inequality of the love of any two lovers for each other; with the difference between the idealized picture of the beloved object and the reality; with the idea that *au fond* human love is egoistic, a *lutte*, a struggle; above all, with the idea that all passion is sterile, since, as M. North puts it, *il est impossible de connaître autrui*: we can never succeed in knowing anybody else.

Now all these things are true enough; but they are only true, in the sense of being incurable, when passion is isolated from love. It is sex in isolation from love that is animal, cruel, selfish, unreal, sterile; but when it is really *human*, when, that is, it is an element in a total, shared, psycho-physical love, then happiness is possible. The concern of the lovers is then precisely to make flesh the vehicle of spirit: to achieve through physical passion the union of two personalities, two minds and two hearts; to infuse animality with tenderness, to overcome inequality, to learn to love this real person and not some idealized self-projection; to conquer selfishness and turn the isolated pursuit of pleasure into a sharing of mutual joy and mutual discovery. It is the concern of the man to control and temper his male sex-aggressiveness by saying and living the words of the liturgy: With my body I thee worship; it is for both of them to achieve this humanizing of sex, and, what is more, to raise it from a humanly lovely to a divinely lovely thing, by learning together to make their love of each other a way to, and an expression of, the love of God.

Mauriac, indeed, has seen this. ‘Where his mother had made a mistake was in not realizing that the body, too, can be sanctified. A young man and a young girl blaze in the face of God like two high clear flames. Drawn into one another, they show the brighter.’¹ But though he may thus state the truth, rationally, it is not the general impression given by

¹ *The Enemy*, p. 230.

his books as a whole. Why? Perhaps because he sees love, the love of man and the love of God too, as the desire to *possess*.

The Eucharist, he tells us, means 'possessing what one loves': but it does not: it means being possessed by what one loves, or tries to love. Human love in its turn does include the desire to possess; but essentially, when it is really love and not isolated passion, it surely means the desire for union, for a complete sharing of life, rather than merely possession; it means the desire to live *in* love, to be possessed *by* love. Mauriac again has seen that the only thing for the sinner is to abandon himself to God's will (p. 118); but here he seems to envisage an attitude which is at once too passive and not passive enough. Too passive inasmuch as he seems to regard the dominion of sin over the sinner as something irremediable apart from something like a miracle: he is right, indeed, to insist on the importance of heredity and similar non-voluntary factors in determining human conduct, but this must be within the framework of a freedom at least to lift up one's hands to God—a freedom which is given us by grace but does not require a miracle. Not passive enough, on the other hand, because, if we lift up our hands to God, it must be, not in order to reach up and seize God, but to beg God to bend down and seize us, to take us into his arms. Just as in human love the essential thing is to want to be possessed by love, and then, living in that atmosphere, to strive and struggle to achieve that object fully; so in divine love the same is true: to want to abandon yourself, to give yourself and all that you are, even your sins, into God's hands, and then, in that attitude of soul, to try to *do* what God wants.

And so we return to Maritain, and the 'purifying of the source' and the question of the 'altitude' at which the novelist does his writing. The purifying is in part a moral question; the altitude is in part a question of holiness or sinfulness; but only in part. No doubt it is particularly so where sins of the flesh are in question; but these are only one of many possible exemplifications of the problem, and by no means the most serious—and it is significant for the understanding of Mauriac himself and his theological point of view that for him they loom so large. But elsewhere it may well be equally—and always it is to some extent—a question of an *intellectual* purification: of achieving a deeper understanding of the fullness of the Catholic faith. M. Bernoville rightly feels that Mauriac's tendencies to Jansenism, fatalism, an obsession with sin, and so forth, are evinced more by what is absent from his work than by what is present (p. xv); and both he and M. North are right again in maintaining that these tendencies are a question of temperament rather than of doctrinal error; but a lacuna which is due to a question of temperament is still remediable, and intellectually remediable. We have no right to grumble at Mauriac because his characters are sombre; we have a right to grumble if the backcloth also is unrelieved gloom, for Christ is risen. To realize that in spite of all the evil and ugliness there

is still sanity and happiness and love and gaiety to be found in the world : this is something which sanctity can achieve ; of course ; but it can be achieved by other means—by a little ordinary common-sense thinking. There are times when one is sorely tempted to feel that Catholic literature in France today tends to take itself altogether too solemnly. . . .

But that is not to say that the problem is not a serious and profound one. Only, we should keep a sense of proportion. Because the novelist must write *ex alto*, and must therefore purify the sources of his writing, we are not to conclude that he may not write at all until he becomes a saint. A theologian does not need to be a good man in order to write good theology ; he only needs a good mind, though admittedly his books will have an immeasurably deeper and better effect on his readers if he is holy than if he is a sinner—not because his theological argument will be any *truer*, necessarily, than it would be otherwise, though of course it will be more profound and luminous, but because of the personal overtones, the *caritas*, which the language will convey to the heart. The novelist is in more difficult case because his approach is essentially more personal, imaginative, evocative ; but here again his first concern is truth, and truth can, after all, be rationally apprehended and measured. If the love of God, and man, and beauty, all lie behind and motivate his making ; and if in the making he tries to paint the truth, and to *bien faire son métier*, he has surely done all that can be asked of him ; and must surely benefit mankind, whatever his personal weaknesses. Mauriac's vision of reality may be incomplete or lopsided ; but his power, his depth of psychological insight, his penetration into the secret recesses of the heart of evil, the beauty of his writing, have enriched us, and made mankind his debtor.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

NEWMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Newman's University, Idea and Reality. By Fergal McGrath. (Longmans. 30s.)

So the sad story has attained its definitive edition. Dr. McGrath suggests the pity of it in his title, and the irony that pursues so many gallant ventures. Ideas the most loved and lovely are betrayed by heartless reality. This Idea Newman had set forth in terms that converted every lover of English eloquence to the 'Religion of civilized times, of the cultivated intellect, of the philosopher, scholar and gentleman'. It had, said R. H. Hutton, 'a very great effect in stimulating the reforms which soon afterwards took place in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge'. Mark Pattison (a man not easily moved) was lost in

admiration of the 'magnificent ideal of a national institute, embracing and representing all knowledge and making this knowledge its own end'. Dr. McGrath with scrupulous justice balances the Idea against the heap of little facts that proved it wanting. His method suits his purpose, a five-hundred-page catalogue of the facts. The lack of shape is the true composition for such a picture. The mass of detail, lying in footnotes like a sediment or clouding the text, is too much for the narrative, just as the facts themselves were not only too complex for the available wisdom but too strong for the available devotion. What were these facts? Poverty, pride, enmity, cowardice, indolence, prejudice. These we have always with us, and against these the Idea did not prevail.

Though it were tempting to lay the whole blame for the failure on the Irish Bishops, Dr. McGrath has made it impossible to acquit Newman himself of unrealism. He saw so much that they could not see, but never really sat down to count the cost. Coming down from theory to practice we cannot but notice that not one single difficulty such as naturally and (you would think) evidently must beset such an undertaking had been fairly confronted or was ever solved. Did Newman really believe that his idea or anything like it would come to birth in Dublin in 1854, or that he could be the means of such incarnation while his heart and allegiance were more than half in Birmingham? It would have been the greatest of St. Philip's miracles. Edward Butler thought that 'Dr. Cullen and the Irish Bishops, not having had a university education themselves, did not properly understand what it was, and with one or two exceptions did not really want such a university as Newman had in mind: their idea was a glorified seminary for the laity'. The Pope called the projected institution '*Lyceum seu Universitas*' or alternatively '*Gymnasium*'. Father Curtis, 'on the experience of thirty years', warned Newman that 'the class of youths did not exist in Ireland who would come to the University, that the middle class was too poor, that the gentlemen wished a degree for their sons and sent them to Trinity College; and the upper class, who were few, sent their sons to English universities, etc.', and he ended by saying, 'My advice to you is this, to go to the Archbishop and say, Don't attempt the university, give up the idea.' And this, without glancing at the perennial problem of Anglo-Irish relations.

'The wrongs which England has inflicted are faithfully remembered,' says Newman; 'her services are viewed with incredulity and resentment; her name and fellowship are abominated; the news of her prosperity heard with disgust; the anticipation of her possible reverses nursed and cherished as the best of consolations. . . .' He saw the background of the Archbishop of Tuam with clearer sympathy than Dr. Cullen who, as Dr. McGrath points out, had been absent from Ireland nearly thirty years and returned with the views of an Italian ecclesiastic. To the Primate, Young Ireland seemed an Irish form of the young

Italy which had driven the Pope to Gaeta. And then there was Dr. Cullen's personal character which Newman described with his usual disinterested and remorseless clarity:

. . . to let me ask a question in June, to let me call about it again and again, to let me write to him about it in July, to let me write to his intimate friend to get an answer for me in August, to give up all chance of one in September and in January accidentally to find all along he has been telling others that he has decided it in the way I asked him not to decide it, though even now, in February, he has not directly or indirectly answered me. I say this is his way of doing business, and the sort of confidence he puts in me.

But then he goes on:

It does not hinder at all our progress, nor my confidence of success, though that collisions are ahead, perhaps between clergy and laity, I do not deny. The breach between them in Ireland is fearful; the University may bring it out.

It is this odd disparity between Newman's vision and his practical judgements, the shadow side, perhaps, of his keen subtlety and flexibility of reason, that keeps him something of a mystery. All the time that he watched and analysed conflicts and contradictions which would have disillusioned the blunt, strong average mind of Manning, he retained not only hope but confidence. With the prejudice and indecision of his ecclesiastical superiors to contend with week by week he not only persuaded himself that the University was coming into existence, but even sustained the hope against hope of transcending national prejudice enough to found, perhaps, an English house. All the time the only regular source of income was 'the pence of the Irish poor'. The Bishops would not give him the finance committee of laymen that he wanted. They would not agree with one another. And he found it something of a consolation to be able justly to blame Dr. Cullen. Someone mistakenly put about the rumour described by Mgr. Barnabo as 'a hoax' that he was to be made a Bishop himself. He was prepared to believe it, not unreasonably since many of the English Bishops did likewise. Yet he had been a Catholic only eight years and, internationally famous as he was, his fame had been earned as an Anglican and a convert. His unique personal qualities were not such as he would himself have expected to earn swift promotion to a bishopric. When he finally resigned, as he had always openly promised to do, his ostensible reason for adhering to his decision was not the project in itself or the way in which the authorities had treated it, but the demand by the fathers of the Oratory for his presence and the 'fatigue of journeying between Birmingham and Dublin'. 'It was,' he said, 'a real great difficulty, and it went to the

root of the question how I could continue Rector—leading as it did immediately to the quantum of residence to be required of me at Dublin, Dr. Cullen really wishing me to be there, throughout the year. Thus he settled the difficulty.' And it is difficult not to agree with Dr. Cullen.

This is the riddle that makes Dr. McGrath's story difficult and fascinating. What was anyone doing in this network of illusions, indecisions, cross-purposes? What, above all, was Newman doing there? The Idea was real enough, but what of the reality? 'My health was far from strong at this time, and I felt the journeys much. I was told something was the matter with my heart, and was not made easy on the subject till I consulted a medical authority in London at Christmas 1857-8.'

The reward for investigating and writing such a story is to raise questions beyond itself. What is the relation between Idea and reality, not in the discussions of philosophers but in the action of Bishops and fathers of the Church? When the Church wants something done, who is to do it? If the Pope appoints four Archbishops to create and administer a Catholic University and issues a Brief naming its Rector, where does the executive responsibility rest? Can one of the Archbishops say, I am too good an Irishman to accept this arrangement? Such was the answer of Liemar of Bremen in the eleventh century to the decrees of Gregory VII, but he was at least acting with and for the German episcopate. Dr. MacHale was a great Irishman and he was distrusted therefore by Dr. Cullen who had come from Rome. Some of the Bishops were prepared to do something; others were kind and hospitable to the Rector for his own sake; several thought his departure an irreparable loss. But is the Rector himself content to resign on the ground that Dublin is a long way from Birmingham, and that someone has told him something which turns out to be mistaken about his health? The preparation for such a policy, really intended, would take many years; it needed very few to expose the situation as it was and to point a solution less splendid but more practicable. The only solid realities were the 'pence of the poor', the loyalty of the staff and the personality of the Rector. The school of medicine prospered because its prosperity depended on utilities and institutions outside the ecclesiastical organization. Philosophy and letters were 'lame' chiefly because there was no charter and therefore no degrees; but there was no charter because the standard of learning scarcely justified one.

In sum, the final solution and all that succeeded in the experiment was the work of laity, and it was by lay standards that Newman's University was judged. Its maintenance depended on lay support, was determined by the wants, the conscience and the cultural standards of laymen. It is unjust to distribute blame and lay the bulk of it on Dr. Cullen's timidity or Dr. MacHale's prejudice. The time was past long since when the Church through the hierarchy could provide for the

whole education of civilized man. Indeed her secular authority and responsibility had only appeared to survive so long because in fact the Council of Trent had left so much managerial power in the hands of national governments. Ireland, above all, was a nation of Catholic laity: its politics and economics were the problem; there was never any doubt of its faith and morals.

Dr. McGrath not only tells the story of Newman's University but sets it in the history of Irish education. We cannot help drawing the moral, set out the more cogently by his unpretentious narrative of small facts. In the sphere of Catholic faith and morals there is no need for paternal solicitude like that which smothers and debilitates the soul of the welfare state—no need and perhaps much harm. Catholics lapse, not because priests fail to fuss about them or for want of elaborate supervision, but for more ancient, simple and human reasons. The strength of the Church among men is not its clericalism but its humanity. It was the humanity of Newman's Idea, recognized and effective far beyond the ambit of his University, that sustained the cause. Whatsoever things are true . . . are Catholic and Dr. McGrath's story ends by showing that what was true in the experiment endured: the rest is what is known as the failure.

T. S. GREGORY

TOLSTOY EN MÉNAGE

The Tolstoy Home. By Countess Tatiana Tolstoy. (Harvill Press. 21s.)

TOLSTOY's personality has long been well known not only through the various biographies and memoirs about him, but also through his own writings which, like Goethe's, are all fragments of one continuous confession. Similarly, there already exists a vast mass of controversial literature upon the Tolstoy home; but the latest contribution possesses a unique interest in that its author is Tolstoy's eldest daughter, Tanya, through whose candid, independent eyes the reader is vouchsafed a new angle of vision upon the fantastic, tragi-comic family life at Yasnaya Polyana. Her diaries, written with fresh, artless sincerity, extend from 1878 up till 1911. The entries are spasmodic throughout, and they become decidedly less informative after Tanya's marriage to Sukhotin in 1899. Nevertheless, despite the absence of new revelations, her fascinating diaries will form a valuable complementary source for future biographers of the Apostle of Tula whose titanic figure inevitably looms large in the whole of this book.

In turn soldier, writer, farmer, educationalist and religious prophet, Tolstoy towered above his pigmy contemporaries like an old, gnarled oak of elemental majesty. As an artist, he is now a classic of universal

appeal; but as a thinker and reformer, his eminence has always been more controversial. 'Wherever he deals with earth,' wrote Turgenev, 'Tolstoy, like Antaeus, regains his strength.' But in middle age Tolstoy was swept away by his demonic intellect as incontinently as by his sensual appetites in his youth. Many a critic has since echoed Turgenev's death-bed appeal: 'My friend, great writer of the Russian land, return to literature!' No doubt, in all his many-sided activities, Tolstoy remained a man of fearless sincerity and honesty—'a great soul', as Matthew Arnold called him. He had many failings and contradictions; but he could have replied with Walt Whitman: 'Do I contradict myself? Very well, then, I contradict myself. (I am large. I contain multitudes.)' He was a consistent, fanatical seeker after Truth; but what he found did not set him free. He revolved within the eternal circle of his reasoning like an angry lion padding round its cage. Tolstoyism was, in fact, a not very original amalgam of Christianity and Rousseauism; but what gave to the doctrine its peculiar fascination was the burning sincerity of accent with which it was preached. Like some defiant Old Testament prophet crying in the wilderness, he inveighed against the lies and shams of the modern Babylon. He became, in Romain Rolland's phrase, the 'conscience of Europe'. He was not perhaps the prophet of a true civilization, but he was certainly the implacable pathologist of the false, decaying culture of the Waste Land. Insensitive to the supernatural essence of religion, Tolstoy was pre-eminently a moralist who, by his shallow rationalism, reduced Christianity to a system of practical ethics. His very conversion sprang less from a spontaneous religious *élan* than from a long, laborious process of ratiocination. He felt a desperate will-to-faith rather than faith itself. He loved his fellow-creatures on principle, austere and without joy, with the knitted brows of the puritan at war with Nature and the Flesh. Above all he was consumed, like Victor Hugo, by a colossal, albeit unconscious and naïve egotism. A fugitive from home, he knocked on the door of a monastery hostel: 'I am Tolstoy. Will you let me in for the night?' 'We let anyone in,' replied the monk. Even his relations with the Deity were rather strained. 'Sometimes,' said Gorky, 'they remind me of two bears sharing the same den.' This devouring, Luciferian pride which led him into heresy and excommunication drove him relentlessly to destroy his own happiness and that of the people he loved. Restless, tortured, despairing, his solitary spirit found no final abode of peace. Dying in the little station-master's cottage at Astapovo, besieged by gendarmes, journalists and cameramen, he kept repeating deliriously the last pathetic words: 'I don't understand what I have to do.' Enormous crowds attended his burial; but over his grave no Christian prayers were said.

During his long lifetime Tolstoy had become a world-famous figure like Voltaire, Goethe or Gandhi. Harking back to the simple life of the

soil, the venerable Patriarch of Yasnaya Polyana steered the plough, swung the scythe, felled wood and made shoes. His estate became the Mecca of a new cult—thither pilgrims came to visit him from all over the world. Amusing embarrassment was liable to befall those who, mistaking the great man for a servant, tried to tip him or spoke sharply to him. Some visitors were distinguished or worthy persons; but there were also the 'dark people'—cranks, 'long-haired nihilists', peasant secretaries, drunks and tramps. Tolstoy received on an average appeals for 1500 roubles a day, and two secretaries would not have sufficed to cope with all his mail. Even Tolstoy at times found this blaze of publicity an intolerable strain, while his family not unnaturally resented the way the Tolstoyans invaded their privacy and monopolized the master of the house.

Yasnaya Polyana was a divided house pursuing two different lives—the life of labour and service centred round Tolstoy and the conventional life of the Russian landed gentry with its generous hospitality and many amusements presided over by Countess Tolstoy.

Yesterday evening [records Tanya], Father came into my room and asked Lev what he had in his hand. Lev was obliged to say it was a bracelet which the Polivanov boys were offering to Zankovetski, the actress. Papa turned sadly away, then asked me what I was reading—a fashion journal! And what was Vera Tolstoy doing this evening? She had gone to the theatre, then was to go to the Skidlovskis. Papa stood motionless for some time, all of us sitting there, hanging our heads, then he turned about and went out, and we all felt terribly ashamed of ourselves.

The daughters clung to their father; but the sons mostly shared their mother's antagonism to Tolstoy's views. 'I will tell the truth about women only when I have one foot in the grave,' Tolstoy confided to Gorky. 'I will tell it, jump into my coffin, pull the lid over me, and say: Now you may do what you like.' It was a tragic home, disrupted by internal strife from which in 1910 the aged Tolstoy was to flee in search of peace and solitude.

Tolstoy's apologists tend to lay the greatest blame for this bitter estrangement at the door of Countess Tolstoy, who is usually presented as headstrong, possessive, proud, jealous, querulous and neurotic. Admittedly she cuts a pathetic figure in the envenomed strife over Tolstoy's copyright and will. However, if it is hard enough to be the wife of a genius, it is still harder to be the wife of an aspiring seer and saint. Within her conventional limits, Sonya Andreyevna had been a devoted wife and mother as well as Tolstoy's steward, business manager and copyist. The revelation of Tolstoy's private diaries, the scandal of the 'Kreutzer Sonata' and the equivocal influence of Chertkov played

a decisive part in unbalancing her. As Tolstoy grew spiritually away from her she became distraught and hysterical and made insane scenes. Their outlooks were irreconcilably opposed and, given their equally rigid wills, were bound to issue in tragedy. But the Countess perhaps wins the greater sympathy.

I am all the more sorry for Mama [writes Tanya], since, first she does not believe anything at all, either her own or Papa's ideas; secondly, she is more lonely, since, because she does and says so many things which are unreasonable, of course all the children are on Papa's side, and she feels her isolation terribly, and then she loves Papa more than he loves her, and is as delighted as a child if he addresses the least kind word to her.

Tanya Tolstoy sympathized with her mother; but she idolized her father: 'I have great faith in him, and agree with him in nearly everything.' Her diaries reflect many Tolstoyan traits—impatience with social life, brooding introspection, moralizing on money, property and marriage, puritanical reactions to sensuous, physical beauty, love of life and fear of death. However, her resolution to conform her life to Tolstoyan principles often succumbs to her vanity in clothes, to her weakness for flattery and attentions, to her love of art and food. Not for nothing was it said of her that she combined 'the charms of Mama with the talents of Papa'. Nor, for all her gifts and charm, did she persevere either in art or in literature. 'I often think,' she concludes, 'that neither I nor Tanya will repeat him or his work. But I do dream of Tanya bearing a son who shall continue the work of his great-grandfather.'

LEONARD WALTON

THE THANKLESS BEGGAR

Portrait of Léon Bloy. By E. T. Dubois. (Sheed and Ward. 7s. 6d.)

SINCE the centenary of his birth five years ago Léon Bloy has been brought more prominently to the notice of English readers. The remarkable personality of this vehement French polemist, who aroused so much hostility in some quarters and who yet converted some notable individuals to Catholicism, has already been sketched in Miss Polimeni's lively little introduction to his life and work. Recently M. Albert Béguin's *Léon Bloy l'Impatient* appeared in translation, and now there is added this *Portrait of Léon Bloy* by Mrs. E. T. Dubois.

What Mrs. Dubois has sought to do in the present volume is to bring out the conception of poverty which she regards as the basis of Bloy's work. To that end she considers his view of the rich and of the poor, and the significance that the Jews and that our Lady of La Salette

held for him. She also examines Bloy's mystical belief in the intimate relationship between the Blood of our Lord, the blood of the poor, and money; which last, according to Bloy, is the image of the Word, the simulacrum which the Jews chose in preference to the divine reality, and whose example has been followed in the opinion of Bloy by a majority of Christians. In the latter part of her book the writer makes some literary reflexions, estimates the value of Bloy's work and gives opinions of him held by others as well as that held by himself. Her central theme, however, is poverty. Mrs. Dubois subordinates her study to that conception, neglecting no doubt *a dessein* his ideas on other subjects such as biblical exegesis and the symbolism of history, both of which, closely connected in his *mystique*, Bloy had very much at heart.

No one will deny that Bloy had an intimate knowledge of poverty, his most constant companion. Two of his children died largely as a result of starvation and his family were often without fuel and without sufficient food. What money he ever had came mostly from the charity of friends, for his books brought him next to nothing. Of course, Bloy was not the only literary man of the late nineteenth century to live in extreme need. Many of his contemporaries had an experience of poverty which was perhaps as deep as his. Such men as Corbière and Verlaine in later life can hardly have been less poor. Laforgue, too, knew the bitterness of great poverty before the post of reader to the Prussian Empress was secured for him, a post that Bloy would have considered too humiliating for his pride and damaging for his sense of mission, as well, of course, as causing him to serve the devil! Indeed, the picture of Bloy in such circumstances can only raise a smile. None of these necessitous poets exalted poverty. One has the impression that Bloy differed from them in this mainly because he felt intensely that what he himself suffered was of universal consequence. He exalted poverty because it was *his own* seemingly ineluctable destiny to live from hand to mouth. One cannot help wondering what his attitude to poverty would have been, had he possessed a private income.

Mrs. Dubois is at pains to assemble what is most positive in Bloy's attitude. Her book gives us a most constructive account of the result of Bloy's meditations on the circumstances of his own life and their relation to the life of our Lord, whom he loved with fervour, with absolute devotion. She stresses his insistence on the essential dignity of the poor, their resemblance with Christ, who was for Bloy the Poor Man *par excellence*. She emphasizes the fact that for Bloy poverty had its meaning only through the poverty of Christ, through the union with Him of all members of the Mystical Body. In the exalted vision of Bloy the blood of the poor and the Blood of our Lord were one, and this mystical identity meant that the rich man who robs the poor—and every rich man robs the poor in his view, for what the rich man has he has at the expense of the poor—is therefore also robbing our Lord. Hence Bloy's

justification for his hatred of the rich, an emotional attitude that Mrs. Dubois fully acknowledges.

In her anxiety to be constructive, to present to her readers a Bloy from whom they may gain the most spiritual profit, Mrs. Dubois has omitted to indicate some of the features of Bloy's conception of poverty that must be mentioned, it seems to me, if we are to have anything like a full view of the man. Bloy did not embrace poverty from choice, nor did he ever resign himself to his poverty. He wrote in *Le Sang du Pauvre*: 'It is intolerable to reason that one man should be born gorged with wealth and another be born at the bottom of a dunghill.' Of this intolerable contrast he was only too keenly aware all his life. The main reason for this would seem to be that he longed ardently to be rich, to have enough money at least to allow him to write his books in comfort without worrying about the necessities of his daily life. When he was able, he lived like the detested *bourgeois*; he had a servant when he could afford one; he enjoyed good food and good wine when he had enough money to buy them. Bloy's poverty was involuntary and he had no belief in voluntary poverty. He wrote in *Le Désespéré* that:

St. Francis of Assisi was a lover and not a poor man. He was in need of nothing, since he possessed his God and lived, through his ecstasy, beyond the world of senses. . . . Real poverty is involuntary, and its essence lies in that it can never be desired. Christianity has wrought the greatest of miracles by helping men to bear poverty through the promise of subsequent rewards. If there are no rewards to the devil with it all! It is absurd to expect anything better from our nature.

In this same novel Bloy describes what will happen to the rich when the poor are eventually goaded into executing justice themselves. It is a gory picture of 'smoking entrails', evoked with obvious zest. Léon Bloy's hopes were not centred entirely in eternity. The patience of the poor never failed to amaze him. He thought their situation intolerable in the full sense of the word and he considered that the way in which wealth was used was an offence crying to heaven for vengeance. He believed, not that the social order was not to be changed, but that it was humanly too late to do anything. Only God Himself could remedy, after some terrible catastrophe, the hideous state of affairs he saw around him and in which he suffered himself. In common with certain other Frenchmen in the nineteenth century he believed that a new manifestation of the Glory of God in the shape of the Third Divine Person was not only called for but indeed imminent. This manifestation was to be connected in some way, in so far as we may understand Bloy's mysterious hints, with the execution of justice. This apocalyptic Bloy, who looms large enough in his books, is not conspicuous in the pages of Mrs. Dubois' book.

Pierre Termier, who was one of those people who underwent the deep attraction that Bloy exercised over certain outstanding individuals, remarked that he was 'a generous wine covered with foam which needed skimming before being drunk'. Perhaps Mrs. Dubois has inaugurated this process. She undoubtedly presents us with wine from which the unwelcome foam has been removed. She produces a Bloy who is calculated not to cause offence, not to turn away from his work the more conventionally minded. It is not that she denies his ferocity, the violence of his prejudices, or the savagery of his resentment, but she does not adequately portray these things. In that sense her book is hardly a 'portrait'. We do not sufficiently see the human being, the perhaps too human being. We do not for instance see the man whom the sculptor, Henry de Groux, describes for us, the man who, coming out from Mass, would sometimes go straight into a café for a *Pernod*. As Henry de Groux wrote in his journal: 'This man whom you might confuse with the Herald of the unknown Reign, with the Paraclete Himself, drinks his *Pernod*, his three glasses of *amer Picon*, and plays endless games of billiards with the income tax collector, the undertaker's assistant, and the police superintendent.' After all, Léon Bloy was as human as that, and one should not neglect to indicate the various facets of his personality.

The contradictions in Bloy's character puzzle Mrs. Dubois. She cannot understand how a man who went to Mass and received Holy Communion every day could also write with such vehemence and apparent total lack of charity about so many of his contemporaries and, above all, could fail to recognize any redeemable features in the English or the Germans! Surely, the whole wonder of Bloy, and in some measure his appeal, lie in the fact that in this man so riddled with the most glaring imperfections the love of God shone so magnificently. After all, we know that grace may work in the most extraordinary ways. Bloy was far from being an *anima naturaliter christiana*. The human factors in his formation Mrs. Dubois does not examine. She does not for instance point out that he was a Southerner and that he had, like Bernanos, Spanish ancestry. These and similar facts do not of course explain him. But his exuberance and his intensity, his love of extremes, become perhaps more understandable when we pay due attention to them. The fact, too, that he was forced by his uncompromising nature to live in circumstances that he felt to be inferior to those that should have been his lot may perhaps account in some degree for the tension and exasperation that are manifest in all that he wrote. The significance of Bloy, to my mind, lies in the grandeur of his attempt, in spite of everything, his own nature and the circumstances of his life, to live without lessening his integrity as a Christian. Few people can have had a more absolute vision of all that is implied by Christianity. It is for that reason that it is his life with which we should be acquainted as well as

with his work. His journals give us his own version of what his life was like after 1892. Many other people have added their testimony. The essential thing is to read Léon Bloy. There is no substitute for a personal knowledge of what he wrote. His quality is unique. The purpose of a study such as the present volume, which is written with careful discrimination, is to acquaint readers with features of his work and to send them to it. This purpose it should achieve admirably.

Mrs. Dubois is right, I think, to stress Bloy's affinities with certain aspects of Romanticism. Naturally, he was not free from the literary influences of his century. From the literary point of view his work is unequal. He had no taste and was sometimes merely scurrilous. He had no sense of structure in the art of the novel, or perhaps it is truer to say that he despised such preoccupations. In any case, aesthetic considerations seem irrelevant when one is being impelled with such force along supernatural heights and depths. He had at his command an extraordinarily wide range of tones; he could write with tenderness or abuse, with simplicity or flamboyance. The trenchant quality of his irony seems to me unsurpassed. Perhaps Mrs. Dubois does not sufficiently stress either the versatility or the effectiveness of his pen. Léon Bloy could write.

Apart from the unfortunate transformations which the name of Abbé Tardif de Moidrey suffers, due, I imagine, to confusion in printing, there is only one small slip which I have noticed in Mrs. Dubois' book. This is a minor misstatement on page 14, where the writer says that the first volume of Bloy's journal was published in 1892. Actually it was not published until 1898, but the first year recorded in this journal is 1892. The writer is to be commended for providing the chronological table, the list of Bloy's works, and a bibliography. It is, though, a pity that none of the relevant works published since the outbreak of the last war is mentioned. The *Inédits de Léon Bloy*, published in Canada in 1945, contain some interesting texts, including a contribution by Count Carton de Wiart which revealed what was hitherto a little known fact about Bloy's domestic affairs. This volume should surely have appeared among the works published posthumously. The anthology of translated passages published in the United States in 1947 under the title of *Léon Bloy, Pilgrim of the Absolute*, and since published in England, might also have been included as it offers to English readers for whom Bloy's vocabulary in the original is too exceptional a representative selection of texts. The bibliography strangely fails to mention the two large and indispensable volumes of biography written by M. Joseph Bollery, *Léon Bloy, Jeunesse et Formation, 1846-1882* and *Léon Bloy, ses débuts littéraires du 'Chat Noir' au 'Mendiant ingrat'*, 1882-1892, published in 1947 and 1949 respectively. Two other inexplicable omissions are the important works by M. Albert Béguin, *Léon Bloy l'Impatient*, published in Switzerland in 1943, and *Bloy, Mystique de la*

Droleur, published in France in 1948. Miss Emmanuela Polimeni's *Léon Bloy, the Pauper Prophet*, would also, I should have thought, have been worthy of mention as the first study of book-length to appear in England.

ERNEST BEAUMONT

SPANISH REVIEWS

If there were an opposition press in Spain, it would be easier to review Spanish reviews. Things would arrange themselves, no doubt, into a neat picture done in contrasting colours; indignation and sympathy would know just where to glow or freeze. But as it is, all reviews are officially sponsored, or virtually so; and there must be many who are sure in advance that there is little point in dealing with them at all, since under such a régime all conclusions must be accounted foregone. Two facts should therefore be at once recorded: first, that over a period of years it has been possible to read through a great deal of print and find as little positive praise of the régime as one finds criticism of it; secondly, that it is precisely the revision of conclusions that the younger writers of Spain are trying to undertake. There are no new exciting movements afoot. The era of paradoxical brilliance is at an end, and there is more anxiety to use one's brain than one's wit. Mainly there is to be observed a determination that, though the Civil War cannot be wished away, its effects—and its causes—can be slowly overcome in the intellectual sphere by a patient study of the past. The works of Spanish thinkers in exile, it should be added, are treated generally with patience and sympathy.

The outstanding general review is the monthly *Arbor*. It recalls the old *Cruz y Raya*, and is published by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, a body responsible for numerous publications. It is usually bulky; and a large part of it has always been devoted to studies of events and movements abroad. These are uniformly excellent; detailed, objective, and broad in scope. The educated Spaniard, if he cares to read what is at hand, cannot possibly be as peninsular as the average Englishman of his class is insular. The accounts, for example, of English institutions that he is offered are models of their kind.

Original articles in this review cover a very wide range of subjects, but there is a bias towards the study of modern history, for this is a field in which it is possible to review the strength and weakness of different types of régime not only from an ideal point of view but in relation to Spain herself. The way in which a writer envisages the present situation of his country can show, for example, through his treatment of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. During the past year there have appeared three articles by J. M. García Escudero on the history of Spain in the

first half of the present century. The matter is familiar enough. One hears of the rottenness of the old party system with its promise of violence to come; of the ineptitude of liberal reformers who were, for the most part, honest men, but whose ideas lacked Spanish roots; of the supposed native tendency of Spaniards towards arbitrary solutions—but the emphasis given is noteworthy: the Monarchy slowly killed itself simply by failing to be a traditional monarchy in the full sense, and by refusing to rule. It gave way to the liberals; and after the king was got rid of, it was logical that the liberals should go too. It is when the centre will not hold that things fall apart. This argument is in tune with some favourite theses of Ortega. The most significant points in it seem however to be (*a*) a continued feeling of instability, a recognition of the essential impermanence of the present régime and an anxiety to find a way to pass beyond it, and (*b*) the refusal of any mere ready-made scheme for doing so. Admirable as this attitude is in many ways, it leads one to question whether there is not a particularly insidious temptation associated with the modern historical approach even at its best. It is all very well to trace rising and falling curves, patterns of a culture in its temporal development; but it needs all the greater effort, when one finds oneself actually on the downward slope, to take heart and look for something immediately practical to do or to recommend.

In the same review Leopoldo Eulogio Palacios writes on 'The absolute primacy of the common good.' This article prolongs a controversy begun by Charles de Koninck in 1943, and is an attack on what is called the 'personalism' of the political theories of Maritain. The discussion is a technical one, and is hardly to be assessed or summarized here. One mentions it because it is not the only sign of coolness towards Maritain, who appears to have no defenders in this matter in Spain, and because his views are sufficiently well known in England for this opposition to have some significance for us. Leaving aside the strictly philosophical and theological questions involved, it is not easy to define the ultimate attitude such an article is based on, except partially, by saying that it is marked by a flat refusal to have anything to do with a political solution that will not somehow be got out of Spain's own innards. The mere defence of such an attitude is easy enough these days. It can be pointed out that the old purveyors of recipes, the rationalist mentors of Spain and of other backward countries, are now all down in the mouth. Europe took the wrong turning centuries ago, in becoming 'modern' (Jaime Bofill: *Man and his destiny*). In its collapse, it has little to offer Spain, except lessons in what to avoid.

In all this there should be recorded, for what it is worth, an impression of a deep unease, of a sense of very real and pressing problems which are not directly discussed; for while, on the one hand, writers are confident in their criticisms of the political thinking of the past and of other countries, they do not suggest that Spain herself has yet found

a sure way of life. How far increasing economic troubles affect this matter, one can only guess. One thing is certain: a dictatorship cannot last for ever, and what it gives place to in this case must be no mere '-ism' of a modern invention. Perhaps there is only England that Spaniards really admire and envy—and that not for her actual institutions and culture so much as simply for her traditionalism, her practical good sense, her spontaneous unity, her persistence in being only herself. One would guess that the influence of Christopher Dawson has helped towards an understanding of England. Estebán Pujals gives an account of some of his work in a recent number. Its title is: 'Christopher Dawson and the English crisis.'

The foregoing notes attempt only to give some hints of the atmosphere of political and historical discussion in a modern Spanish review. They are inconclusive, as they ought to be. Spain a few years ago, it is now being calmly explained, 'became a symbol' for western intellectuals. The word 'symbol' has a curious power and holiness in modern necromancy, and is here supposed to induce a respectful hush while the tune is changed. But it is, to say the least, rather foolish to turn a country into a symbol; and once this has been done, it becomes extraordinarily difficult to turn it back again into a real place.

Amongst a wide range of articles on other topics, one might pick out some good 'Notes on English Catholicism' by Enrique Cavanna de Aldama, on the occasion of the Centenary of the Restoration of the English Hierarchy, and an article 'Towards a theory of the Catholic Intellectual' by Pedro Laín Entralgo. This writer is one of the most outstanding, in the sphere of critical thought, of the generation which is now at full maturity. Profoundly Catholic and broad in his range, he sins, if that were possible, by excess of sympathy and fairmindedness in his writings on earlier generations. The present article attempts to study the task of the intellectual within the mystery of the gathering together of all things in Christ (Eph. i, 9-10). It has that emphasis upon the reality and wholeness of the man and his situation in time that is characteristic of the best Spanish thought; an emphasis which long preceded the present fashion of existentialism, and has tended towards common sense rather than away from it. It was, after all, the Spanish philosopher Ortega who, in modern times, used patiently to explain that reason ought to be 'vital', i.e. belong to real life and flesh and blood, instead of being supposed to oppose them.

The Jesuit review, *Razón y Fe*, circulates in South America as well as in Spain. In its April 1950 number it comments on the Pope's address to the International Congress of the Catholic Press of the preceding February, in which His Holiness spoke of the necessity of having an informed public, and of the just liberty of the press, without which this is impossible. The article argues against the system of censorship-before-publication and in favour of a Press Law which would somehow set

limits within which the writer would be more or less free to use his discretion. It urges—rather mildly—that the total suppression of criticism weakens the state.

Razón y Fe discharges an apologetic task. It is now in its fifty-first year; and, one is moved to add at once, has hardly changed a bit. It deals firmly with intellectual fashions from the standpoint that that is often all they are. To the modern English eye, it has perhaps too much brisk assurance of manner, seems rather old-fashioned, its appeal quite limited to the converted. One has to remember that when it comes to the attitude proper to be adopted in our modern crisis, Spaniards have at least far more experience of crises than we have. It is at any rate refreshing, for a change, to read the almost contemptuously laconic survey which a review like this will give of the various contemporary theories of the 'problem of Spain'; one has to sit up and consider how much of the fuss and how many of the paradoxes have been really worth while. Charitably malicious (or hideously rash), let us say that *Razón y Fe* is an excellent review, and would be even better if there were something like our *Blackfriars* to go with it. Ortega has glibed. *Razón y Fe* glibes back, and shrewdly enough, picking on the fatal weakness of that brilliant mind for the rôle of tipster.

Spain is very well provided with reviews, many of them local and specialist. There is little point in cataloguing them here. One might mention however the *Revista de Estudios Políticos*—fat and austere; the philosophical quarterly of the Jesuits, *Pensamiento*; their *Estudios Eclesiásticos*; and the *Revista de Filosofía* of the *Instituto Luis Vives*. The enormous *Escorial*, which commands a good deal of the best talent in criticism, gives most attention to art and letters; and there is also the literary monthly *Insula*, which in format is rather like our *T.L.S.*, though much slighter. It is also less severe, and in its pages writers are rather puffed than blown upon. This last characteristic is defensible and perhaps necessary, in view of the need to expand the reading public of Spain. It casts its net very widely. As was always the case in Spain, foreign authors are much publicized; and the name of T. S. Eliot figures often in its articles. It has a newer rival in the *Correo Literario*.

T. E. MAY

GERMAN REVIEWS

WALTER DIRKS in the April *Frankfurter Hefte* has attempted a response from the layman's standpoint to an important article by Fr. Karl Rahner on 'Situationsethik' which appeared in the *Stimmen der Zeit* of February 1950. He explains his point of view modestly, convincingly, and only after he has looked in vain for some lengthy comment by another theologian. He would certainly condemn that moral outlook

against which Fr. Rahner's article is primarily directed, namely, one exclusive of all universal and fixed principles, concentrating wholly on a situation presumed to be absolutely unique and even exalting sin as if its mystery were of the same character as the mysteries of grace. But it is worth while examining some of the motives—less apparent to the theologian—which have led Catholics deeply involved in the active life of our times to a qualified form of the new ethics. It is in one sense a new attempt to deal with the perennial problem of the universal and the particular, but there is no need to be disturbed by the thought of a development in moral theology stimulated by the needs of the day: Ignatius of Loyola prayed differently from Ignatius of Antioch, there is a different moral climate in a modern Dominican priory from that which existed in a monastery of the early Celtic missionaries to Europe. Laymen have for some time now been putting awkward questions to theologians and confessors, and the weakness of Fr. Rahner's article was that it paid too little attention to their needs. The 'situation', that place in the world in which man must act, is always eloquent; it calls for a living response and out of many responses is history made. The truly devout person gives that response which he thinks God wants of him, but there is a point at which moral theology leaves him still wondering what God's will *hic et nunc* may be. Yet he is called to make an extremely delicate decision, to choose between mortal sin and heroic holiness, far more often today than in the past: 'Situation-ethics are Christian ethics to the extent that they no longer make an essential distinction between fixed law and Christ's call to perfection in the interior dialogue of the soul with God.' Much of life clearly can be governed by laws easily understood, many activities stand outside all moral considerations, but all these things together evoke our response and to the extent that we fail they must be brought under the mercy of God.

One of the problems out of which the demands for a 'new' theology arise is discussed by Curt Hohoff in *Wort und Wahrheit* for March. The layman is not asking the theologian to abandon his principles nor to adapt a speculative science to immediate practical needs. But when a whole generation appears to be impervious to religion as it is generally taught and remote from the older people who still find meaning and comfort in traditional forms, theology may legitimately be asked to find more attractive means of expression and to develop those perennial truths which are most urgently needed at the present time. The 'lost' generation consists of men and women in the early thirties, reduced to less than normal numbers through the war, born too early to go to school under the Nazis and too late to have to face the alternative of resignation from office or acceptance of the party membership: they have not known the warmth of life, either in security or struggle. They are individualists, coldly mechanical in their callings, slightly contemptuous of the world around them; they are industrious and alert, even

interested, and yet inwardly not committed; the will is hard as steel and they pursue often quite ambitious plans with absolute confidence and utter ruthlessness. They are not hostile to religion, they are even open to its influence, but they are not aware of any deep need of it and they are merely bored by the practices and outlook of many of its supporters. They would be ready to accept dogma and liturgy if only clerics and devout laymen did not show themselves to be 'so astonishingly inexperienced in their dealings with people who make no demands and have no expectations (*voraussetzungslose Menschen*)'. The Church's strict moral teaching may not be beyond their capacity, but they want other grounds for it besides 'increasing the number of God's children'; theologians must expound the eternal truths in the language of 1950, not of 1880.

In the *Schweizer Rundschau* for March, Oskar Bauhofer writes on the whole hopefully, although with some reservations, on the constructive forces of our times. He calls attention to a simple distinction which is too often ignored:

Freedom of religion and conscience may take two forms: firstly, religious and political convictions pertain to the sacred and for the state untouchable sphere of personality; or, secondly, each may hold his belief, unbelief, or superstition as he pleases and religious or political convictions do not count for the state as long as they do not bring their holders into conflict with public order or the law. It is easy for anyone to see that this latter freedom is a true freedom, but it has scarcely anything in common with religion and conscience in the proper sense. It is easy to see also that no one can build up a state or community on this freedom, since the religion and conscience supposed to be free are so completely negative.

Hochland for April offers a wide choice of articles, including a comment by the Lutheran Asmussen on the definition of the Assumption, V.-E. von Gebssattel on the anthropology of dread (Dread has ceased to be a private affair of the individual. Western man everywhere goes in dread and fear), Heinz Flügel on Sartre's Hell and a study by Hans Grassl of Franz von Baader's philosophy of love.

In all the German periodicals recently there has been much discussion of Willi Forst's film *Die Sünderin*. It is apparently tasteless, frivolous and more than usually offensive to sound morality, and there have been demonstrations by Catholics in some cities against its presentation, while the representatives of both Confessions have resigned from the voluntary commission set up by German film producers. Naturally even greater crowds have been attracted by the additional sensation and the *Oesterreichische Furche* contrasted the enthusiastic reception of the film in Vienna with the lack of interest in Eliot's *Cocktail Party*.

Heinrich von Srbik, the Austrian historian, died on 16 February.

The value and significance of his work was brought out in a very fine article in the *Rheinischer Merkur* by Franz Schnabel. Born in 1878 of an Austrian father and Westphalian mother, his origins and studies alike led him to a conception of Austria's rôle in Europe easily mistaken by superficial readers—especially in the upheavals of the 'thirties—for pan-Germanism. Actually he rose above the polemics of those historians who opposed to the Habsburg dynasty to the German principalities, deeply aware of the historic mission of an empire uniting Germans in the service of Europe but counting for more in itself than the family with which it was so long associated. In his most important work, the biography of Metternich, which appeared in 1925, he rejected alike the villainous figure described by the nationalist historians and the loyal servant of the house of Habsburg pictured by their opponents: he saw the European statesman who tried to stem the rising tide of nationalism before it overwhelmed the old Europe, and considered that he did postpone the catastrophe for more than a century.

The greatest Catholic publishing firm in Germany, Herder of Freiburg, celebrates this year the 150th anniversary of its foundation. Bartholomew Herder began the work at Meersburg on Lake Constance in 1801 and transferred the business to Freiburg in 1808. Under the Nazis its activities were severely handicapped and the house in Freiburg was destroyed by bombs during the war. The whole business has been successfully rebuilt since 1945 and some 350 new publications, many of them lengthy volumes magnificently produced, testify to its renewed vitality.

EDWARD QUINN

FRENCH REVIEWS

SINCE the last chronicle in this series there have appeared two further important articles on the Definition of the Dogma of the Assumption. In *La Pensée Catholique* (No. 17) Bishop Mathieu of Aire-et-Aix examined the Papal Constitution of the Dogma especially in the light of certain Protestant reactions, notably that of Pasteur Boergner. In one interesting passage Mgr. Mathieu mentioned the interest of Cardinal Mercier in the devotion of the Assumption. This aspect of the work which preceded the definition was developed in an article in *La Vie Spirituelle* of May, entitled 'The Intuitions of Cardinal Mercier'. Recalling that the Cardinal-Archbishop of Malines instituted a number of petitions for the definition and obtained permission for theological commissions to study its definability, the writer noted some interesting coincidences of dates in the life of Cardinal Mercier with the eventual proclamation of the Dogma. He also suggested that the Cardinal's furtherance of these studies seemed rather to stimulate his other great interest—the reconciliation of the Christian Churches and concluded

by quoting the Cardinal's life as an example against two different tendencies in certain Catholic writing on the circumstances of the proclamation—those which still maintain a note of regret on the definition having been made at the present historical juncture, and the opposite tendency to anticipate a whole series of further Marial definitions.

The March issue of *La Vie Spirituelle* was devoted to a special study of Easter as a fulfilment of the Old Testament—'Easter, the Exodus of Christians'. The issue was a deliberate effort to draw attention to the growing emphasis on the study of the Old Testament which has developed in France in the last two or three decades. The April issue studied the place of Easter in the liturgical year, while the May number, devoted principally to studies of the significance of Pentecost in relation to the Old and New Testaments, also had an interesting account of the celebrations in France of the Pascal Vigil authorized by the Sacred Congregation of Rites. This last theme was also taken for editorial consideration in the April issue of *La Vie Intellectuelle*—'O Blessed Night'. Pointing to the revival of interest in liturgical practices which has marked the last twenty years, the Editor concludes: 'That Fire which will henceforth illumine the night before Easter will be the clearest call to Christians to remember the mission which is confided to them—to bring light to a world which is in anguish because it cannot come out of the night.'

Two boldly speculative articles on the present position of the Church in France were published—one in the April issue of *Études* and the other in a review in *La Vie Spirituelle* for May. Both were provoked by the recent book by Canon Boulard, *Essor ou Déclin du Clergé français* (Editions du Cerf), with a preface by Archbishop Feltin. This is an important addition to the series of studies of the problem of re-evangelizing France which are associated with the names of Canon Boulard, the late Abbé Godin, l'Abbé Daniel, and M. Michonneau. Just as the title of this latest book deliberately recalls the famous Lenten Pastoral of the late Cardinal Suhard, *Essor ou Déclin de l'Église*, so the title of Archbishop Feltin's second Lenten Pastoral, *Le Sens de l'Église*, recalls that of his predecessor, *Le Sens de Dieu*. It is clear that the impulsion of Cardinal Suhard in the fields of missionary experiment is being actively continued.

Before closing the review of the strictly spiritual articles of the last quarter it may be worth mentioning that M. Daniel-Rops gave three important addresses on St. Paul in the important *Université des Annales*, which presents the most brilliant speakers in France. (The papers are republished in the monthly *Les Annales-Conferencia*.)

Literary articles during the months under review have covered a fascinating diversity of topics. The February *Études* contained an article by R. Rouquette on '*Positions et Oppositions d'Emmanuel Mounier*', based on two recent publications of Mounier's own work and the special commemorative number of *Esprit* for December. While rendering hom-

age to Mounier's personal practice of and belief in orthodox Catholicism, the writer does not fail to note certain ambiguities (*ambivalences*, to employ Mounier's own jargon) of Mounier's thought and propaganda. He notes that 'Firstly, that Communism whose ends and means Mounier condemns does not fail to attract him. . . . In practice Mounier is rather disposed to collaborate with Communism in the destruction of capitalist society and the erection of a socialist society. . . . Secondly he has a double conception of history . . . what may be called a "tragic optimism".' He concludes: 'Here we touch the weakness of Mounier's courageous attitude. He considered Communism too exclusively as a theoretic doctrine which could be purified, and not sufficiently as a monstrous, exclusive and implacable political power.'

Another issue of *Études* (April) studied two other famous authors recently dead—Maxence van der Meersch and André Gide. Writing on van der Meersch, M. Barjon sums up his contribution to the modern novel. 'Whatever be the final verdict one fact was indisputable—it existed with a solid reality. Despite its frequent awkwardness and heaviness an irresistible drive carried it along. It might irritate one, make one ill at ease: it did not leave one indifferent.' The death of Gide provoked a study by M. André Blanchet of Gide's relationships with his Catholic friends. The justifiably critical tone of the essay was a welcome change from the decorous cant which one read on all sides about Gide's life, work and influence immediately after his death. Gide's moral life was repugnant, his achievement overrated, his influence disastrous. It was high time someone said so in a Catholic journal. If the notice on Gide in the April issue of *La Vie Intellectuelle* said considerably less than this, the readers would probably overlook the weakness in gratitude for the first-class documentary interest in the March number in the article 'Récit de ma conversion' by Max Jacob. This is a document which no devotee of Jacob can afford to miss.

The political interest of the last quarter has been diverse. The February *Vie Intellectuelle* was devoted to a study of various aspects of contemporary Germany—the Church in Germany, the attitude of German youth, and a study of Ernst Wiechert, who died last summer. Wiechert was imprisoned in Buchenwald in 1938 for having expressed his sympathy with the family of Pastor Niemöller. It was interesting to read in the April issue a study of the life and action of Niemöller during and since the Hitler régime: it does not completely explain some of Niemöller's recent peculiar opinions, but it is a valuable document. The same issue of *La Vie Intellectuelle* contained an analysis of the relationship between the Church and State in France, the confused juridical position of which is a contributory factor to the present deplorable quarrel about the Catholic schools. Clearly some coherent principles of relationship are long overdue: the present hotch-potch of residues from the Concordat and the Separation lends itself too easily to the anti-

clerical campaigns of M. Bayet and his friends, who do not seem to realize that the era of Combisme ended fifty years ago.

Among the political events of the quarter which exercised the commentators were the amnesty proposals voted by the French Assembly and the Declaration of the Rights of Man adopted by UNESCO. The February number of *Études* deplored the narrowness of the amnesty law as voted, and the Party vindictiveness shown by Deputies of the extreme Left. 'Those who can benefit from this amnesty will be few. For the hundred thousand people condemned to national indignity the problem is unchanged. Those condemned to national indignity and who are not amnestied still form a class of untouchables.' *La France Catholique* (6 April) published an important article entitled 'Does UNESCO eliminate Christ?', drawing attention the fact that the text of the Declaration of the Rights of Man adopted by UNO in December 1948, and subsequent commentaries of this text, took no account of the protests of Catholic organizations at the 'elimination' of the life and teaching of Christ as a factor in the history of the world. The article comments on an Album which is intended by UNESCO to serve as a guide for educational exhibitions. In considering slavery the Album goes directly from the Stoic philosophers—Epictetus, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius—to 'the first messages of the Christian Church' and to St. Paul. It merely recognizes that 'these messages are too impregnated with the principle of the equality of souls in relation to redemption for the application of this principle to the case of slaves not to occupy therein a pre-eminent place'. *La France Catholique* comments: 'But between Licinius and St. Paul there came Christ; but in this passage his name is not even mentioned. The work of the Christian Emperors is recognized, but the origin of this new attitude is not mentioned any more than that of the ideas found in St. Paul . . . The Sermon on the Mount has no legal historical existence in the eyes of the authors of the Album and its commentary.'

Finally, the first text which has come to hand among these periodicals on the ratification of the Schumann Plan is that of *La France Catholique* (27 April). Two articles on the economic and political aspects of the scheme did not fail to point out the numerous obstacles and contradictions which would have to be overcome before the Plan could become a reality among European institutions. But the tone was sympathetic and echoed the friendly interest which has been shown to the negotiations by American opinion, rather than the continuing reserve of most British commentaries.

FRANK MACMILLAN

NOTE.—In the review in our last number of *History: Its Purpose and Method*, by G. J. Renier (Allen & Unwin), the price was wrongly given as 10s. The correct price is 16s.

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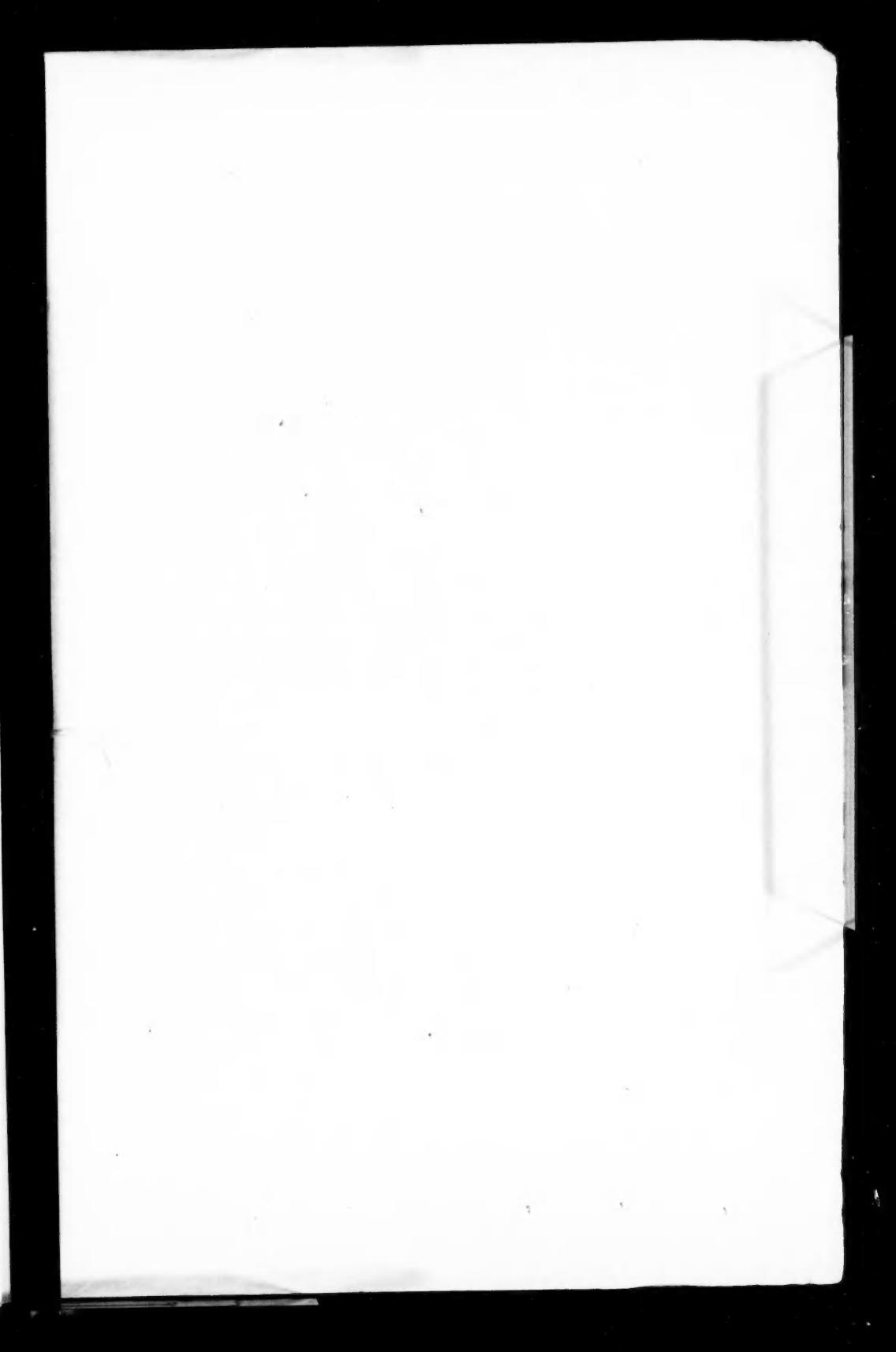
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